



Islamabad POST

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Aston Villa set to sign Marco Asensio on loan

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PTI spreading hate politics

Naqvi warns of action over PTI's 'Feb 8 protests'

The security czar said that the government would request PTI to cancel the demonstrations

BUREAU REPORT /DNA

LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday urged the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to abandon its plan to stage a protest in Lahore on February 8, warning that any public gathering would be dealt with in the same manner as on November 26. His remarks come as the opposition party launches a massive drive against the 2024 general elections. As part of its campaign against the 2024 elections, the former ruling party has announced protests in various parts of the country. The security czar said that the government would request PTI to cancel the demonstrations. "If PTI does not listen to us, as they did on November 26, we will respond in the same manner, and the state will take action," he warned while speaking to journalists at the inauguration of a new passport office in Lahore.

Referring to an international match scheduled in Lahore on February 8, the minister, who also serves as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman, criticised PTI's decision to hold protests on the same day. He accused the party of damaging Pakistan's international image by organising demonstrations whenever foreign dignitaries visit the country. "Their politics promote chaos rather than constructive development," he remarked. PTI has declared February 8 a Black Day to protest alleged electoral fraud in the 2024 general elections. It has announced a protest campaign across Sindh from February 1 to February 8 against what it terms rigging in the elections. Additionally, PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Junaid Akbar announced on January 30 that the party would hold a public rally in Swabi on February 8, following the directives of its incarcerated founder, Imran Khan. The party has also sought permission to hold a public gathering in

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PTI to march towards Islamabad with full preparation this time

PTI will hold a historical power show in Swabi on February 8

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) KP president Junaid Akbar Khan said that they would march towards Islamabad with full preparation this time. Talking to media on Sunday, the newly-appointed provincial president said that he would try to fulfil his responsibilities given by the party founder Imran Khan. "We were not expecting live bullets on us last time. We'll come with complete preparation this time," Junaid Akbar said. According to MNA Junaid Akbar, he doesn't want any confrontation with the government and institutions. He added that PTI would hold a historical power show in Swabi on Feb 8. PTI's KP president was of the view that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur will focus on the governance in the province while he would handle the party affairs. "I am not in the race of getting any ministry. The changes in the government is the mandate of chief minister and I have nothing to do with it," he said.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif administers polio vaccine to children at the inaugural ceremony of the National Polio Campaign 2025. - DNA

'Italian Trade Agency to revive Pakistan's Industrial sector'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Italian Trade Agency is determined to revive Pakistan's Industrial sector and play its due role to promote business climate in Pakistan through financial, technical and Eco-friendly technologies for economic stability and sustainable growth. This was stated by Dr. Salvatore Parano, Director, Ufficio ICE, Italian Embassy, Islamabad in a corporate meeting held at FPCCI, United Business Group (UBG) Secretariat, Islamabad, said a press release issued here on Sunday. During the meeting a wide range of Italian brands and International business trends came under discussion.

Continued on Page 06

India seizes cargo bound for Karachi

Alleges its use in nuclear and missile programmes

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHIA: shipping consignment of commercial goods bound for Karachi from a Chinese port was seized by Indian authorities on charges of being components of missile and nuclear programme of Pakistan. The importer, Cosmos Engineering, has filed a claim at the Sindh High Court (SHC) for damages against the shipping company and the freight service company for the seizure of a Pakistani company at an Indian port. The claim, filed through Usman Farooq Advocate, has taken the position

Continued on Page 06

Vows to rid of disease

PM Shehbaz Sharif launches maiden polio drive of 2025

National polio vaccination drive to target millions of children in the country to save their future, says premier

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday launched a maiden nationwide anti-polio campaign for the year 2025 by administering polio drops to children under the age of five. Addressing the launching ceremony, PM Shehbaz reaffirmed his government's determination to eliminate the crippling disease from the country. He said that the national polio vaccination drive would target millions of children in the country to save their future and health. The nationwide anti-polio campaign will run from February 3 to 9. The premier hoped that the dedicated teams would work day and night to eradicate the disease, and would reach the far flung areas and villages, adding these teams would successfully meet the huge national responsibility by utilising their complete energies. The prime minister said that unfortunately, during the last year, a total of 77 polio cases were reported in the country which emerged as a huge challenge, besides posing a setback.

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Govt considers converting circular debt into public debt

Circular debt restructuring will result in lowering tariff by Rs3.37 per unit

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The government has initiated efforts to convert circular debt (CD) in the power sector into public debt, a move expected to reduce electricity tariffs by Rs3.37 per unit. Additionally, the government is prepared to restructure \$16.26 billion in debt acquired for various energy projects, including hydel, imported coal,

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Briefs

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to boost trade ties

Both sides also discussed strengthening their strategic partnership, focusing on economic collaboration and trade

DNA

BAKU: Pakistan and Azerbaijan have vowed to deepen bilateral ties by expanding cooperation in energy, investment, and tourism, officials said on Sunday. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Pakistan's Minister for Privatisation and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, and Azerbaijan's Prime Minister, Ali Asadov, in Baku. Khan highlighted Pakistan's investment potential, particularly in the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. He invited Azerbaijan to invest in Pakistan's motorway infrastructure and other key sectors, assuring full facilitation for Azeri investors.

Senators' salaries likely to exceed Rs0.5m

Remuneration of members of Upper House expected to be increased to Rs519,000

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Members of the Senate are likely to get pay raises with their remuneration expected to be made equal to the one approved for members of the National Assembly (MNAs). Senate finance committee is expected to meet next week during which the panel was likely next week to approve the increase in salaries of Senate members to Rs519,000 from the existing Rs150,000.

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26th amendment

Lawyers announce march towards Islamabad on 10th

LHCBA calls for Judicial Commission of Pakistan's meeting to pick judges to be cancelled immediately

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Lawyers across the country have announced plans to march towards Islamabad on February 10 in protest against the 26th Constitutional Amendment. The decision was made during a convention organised by the Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA), where LHCBA President Asad Manzoor Butt presented the convention's declaration. Butt said that legal professionals nationwide demand a full court hearing on the matter, insisting that Supreme Court proceedings be broadcast live. The Judicial Commission of Pakistan's (JCP) meeting, to be held on February 10, should be cancelled immediately, he demanded and said no new appointments should be made until the case on 26th Amendment is decided, adding that the senior most judge of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) should be made its chief justice. "We condemn the suspension of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Secretary Salman Mansoor. We condemn the amendment to the Peca [Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act].

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Islamabad lawyers to boycott of courts

He said the purpose of this transfer was to create schism among the lawyers community

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Bar Council, High Court Bar, and District Bar Association jointly held a press conference on Sunday to announce a boycott of the High Court and district courts on Sunday. Islamabad Bar Council chairman Aleem Abbasi said the lawyers community rejected the decision of law ministry to transfer the judges of high courts to the IHC. He said the purpose of this transfer was to create schism among the lawyers community and this step would be opposed wholeheartedly. He also called upon his lawyers community to support this oppose this move. He said the lawyers of capital would

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4 Levies personnel among five martyred in DI Khan

Assistant commissioner says Levies personnel were attacked while on their way to recover stolen vehicle

SHAMIM SHAHID

DI KHAN: Four Levies force personnel along with a driver were martyred when their vehicle came under attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan. The Levies personnel, according to the assistant commissioner, were attacked on their way to recover a stolen truck in a vehicle driven by private staff in tehsil Daraban. The bodies of Levies personnel have been shifted to Daraban hospital while an investigation was underway, added the official. Saturday's attack comes as the province bears the brunt of rising militancy, especially since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021. The security forces have been carrying out extensive anti-terror operations across the country to curb the menace of terrorism in both KP and Balochistan, the two provinces that abut Afghanistan. On Saturday, as the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) announced that 23 terrorists were killed during the

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Pakistan-Iran Gas Pipeline is only solution of energy crisis: Governor

DNA

LAHORE: Governor of Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider on Sunday said that the Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline has been the only solution of the energy crisis in the country. Talking to media here, Punjab's governor said the initiative taken by President Asif Zardari should be taken forward. He also called for promotion of border trade with Iran. "A delegation of Pakistani businessmen will soon visit Iran," he said. He said the Governor General Khorasan will facilitate in visa fee and other issues.

Continued on Page 06

In first foreign visit

Syria's Al-Jolani meets Saudia Arabia's MBS

The president is accompanied by the country's foreign minister, Asaad Hassan Al-Shibani

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: The President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ahmed Al-Sharaa, met with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Sunday on his first foreign trip since taking office, Saudi state media reported. Syrian state news Agency reported the president was accompanied by the country's foreign minister, Asaad Hassan Al-Shaibani. A picture posted on social media platform X by the Syrian Arab Republic's presidency showed Al-Sharaa and Al-Shaibani en route to Saudi Arabia. Al-



Sharaa became president after the toppling of the regime of Bashar Assad in December last year. Last month, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, visited Damascus and said the Kingdom

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Fourth Offshore Patrol Vessel PNS YAMAMA arrives in Karachi

KARACHI: : Fourth Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) PNS YAMAMA arrived in Karachi. Upon arrival, an impressive reception ceremony was held at PN Dockyard. Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, was Chief Guest on the occasion. While addressing the ceremony, Commander Pakistan Fleet highlighted that the addition of PNS YAMAMA in the PN fleet will significantly enhance the Pakistan Navy's capability of safeguarding the Maritime frontiers of Pakistan, according to a news release issued by Director General Public Relations (NAVY). He also emphasized that the induction of such multipurpose state-of-the-art platforms will provide vital support to the ongoing PN Maritime security patrol in the Indian Ocean. PNS YAMAMA is a multi-purpose and highly agile medium-sized Offshore Patrol Vessel equipped with a self-protection and terminal defence system, state-of-the-art electronic warfare, and anti-ship and anti-air warfare capabilities. Additionally, it is capable of embarking a multi-role helicopter and can operate independently or as part of a task force for extended durations to execute a variety of missions. —APP

Police launch grand operation against drug dealers

PESHAWAR: Capital City Police have launched a special crackdown to eliminate drug trafficking from society, particularly to protect the younger generation from the harmful effects of crystal meth (ice). During the first day of the operation, police registered 38 cases and arrested 42 suspects involved in drug smuggling and sale, said the police spokesman. Among those arrested were members of inter-provincial drug smuggling networks and suppliers distributing narcotics in Peshawar and other districts. The crackdown had specifically targeted individuals selling the highly dangerous drug ice. In the past 24 hours, law enforcement has seized over 31 kilograms of ice, 27 kilograms of hashish, 3 kilograms of heroin. —APP

Joint operation carried out against illegal electricity connections

NAWABSHAH: WAPDA officials, Police, Lady Police, and Rangers personnel conducted a joint operation to recover electricity arrears and eliminate illegal connections in different areas of Nawabshah city. The checking and recovery operation was conducted in areas of Old Nawabshah, Jam Sahib Road, Jamshed Colony, Double Road, Maryam Road and other areas in order to prevent electricity theft and ensure recovery of arrears. During the operation dozens of illegal connections were disconnected, while multi-frequency domestic and commercial connections were checked. Contingent Rangers and Police were present during the operation to deal with any resistance. —APP

Governor Sindh visits Ethiopian Embassy Tourism Pavilion

Ibrahim Khalid Tawab, Honorary Consul of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Karachi, along with the Embassy staff received the Governor Sindh upon his arrival at the pavilion

DNA

Karachi: MUHAMMAD KAMRAN Khan Tessori, Governor of Sindh, visited the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad's Tourism Pavilion which has been set up at the Pakistan Travel Mart 2025 to promote Ethiopian cultural diversity and multifaceted tourism. H.E. Ibrahim Khalid Tawab, Honorary Consul of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Karachi, along with the Embassy staff received the Governor Sindh upon his arrival at the pavilion. On the occasion, the Governor Sindh was briefed about Ethiopian tourism, cultural heritage and also about the development of its capital Addis Ababa on the modern lines. The FDR Ethiopia and Pakistan enjoy strong bilateral relations, said the Governor Sindh while appreciating the role of the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad in promoting its tourism and culture in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Last year at the Karachi Feast, the Governor Sindh inaugurated the Ethiopian Embassy Tourism Pavilion and this time, he has the honor to open the traditional Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony. Previously, the Governor Sindh also hosted a grand ceremony at the Governor House to celebrate the Ethiopian New Year.



CM stresses wetlands' role in climate protection

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has emphasized the critical role of wetlands in combating climate change, calling their protection essential for environmental survival. In her message on World Wetlands Day, the CM said "Wetlands are the lungs of our planet and serve as habitats for aquatic and wildlife species." The CM said that wetlands help maintain groundwater levels, absorb carbon, and control floods, making them vital for ecological balance. "For the first time in Pakistan's history, the Punjab

government has developed a comprehensive climate change policy, prioritizing the conservation and restoration of wetlands and other natural ecosystems. To safeguard these natural resources, watchtowers and checkpoints are being established for monitoring purposes," she added. The CM said that special facilities are being introduced to promote recreational and research activities in wetlands and other natural habitats, adding that the fisheries sector has been regulated, with strict penalties for violations to prevent environmental damage. The CM said, "No activity that disrupts the natural balance of wetlands

or other ecological areas will be allowed." She added that the Punjab government is working with the public, experts, and international organizations to protect the natural environment. CM Maryam Nawaz urged citizens to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles and support the government's conservation efforts. "Our land is a trust for future generations, and we must protect and improve it," she concluded. It is pertinent to mention that WWF-Pakistan, on the occasion of World Wetlands Day 2025, underscored the urgent need to protect and restore the country's wetlands, which serve as crucial ecosystems for bi-

odiversity, local communities, and sustainable development. In a press release issued on the occasion, WWF-Pakistan highlighted that Pakistan is home to more than 240 significant wetlands, covering approximately 10% of the country's land area. These wetlands provide essential ecosystem services such as water filtration, carbon storage, flood control, and habitat for migratory birds and commercially important fish. However, these fragile ecosystems are under severe threat due to water scarcity, pollution, encroachment, unregulated development, climate change, and unsustainable resource extraction.

Call for steps to reduce harm from continued tobacco use

PESHAWAR: Public health experts have called for adoption of a multi-faceted approach to address the growing economic burden of tobacco consumption, driven by a sharp rise in preventable diseases. The strategy should focus on mitigating the widespread health and financial consequences of tobacco use through comprehensive and coordinated efforts, they added. "The economic burden of tobacco use in Pakistan amounts to over 615 billion rupees including direct costs, such as healthcare expenditures for treating tobacco-related diseases, and indirect costs, such as lost productivity due to illness and premature death," shares Sana Ahmad, Programme Manager Blue Veins, a non-governmental organization striving to promote awareness about threats of tobacco on public health. Talking to APP, Sana said due to lack of effective legislation regarding tobacco control and to curb consumption and trade of modern form of smokeless tobacco

products like e-cigarettes, heated tobacco, sheesha etc, the regulating authorities are facing difficulties in taking action against the violators. Presently, she said, there is no check on supply and trade of tobacco products through social media or e-business and such products including e-cigarettes and heated tobacco are openly imported and supplied to people through home delivery. The number of tobacco user in our country are estimated around 24 million adults while the smokeless tobacco like gutka and naswar are widely available and affordable, making them accessible to even the poorest segments of society. The economic burden of tobacco extends beyond healthcare. Tobacco use disproportionately affects the working-age population, leading to lost productivity due to illness, disability, and premature death, she laments. The government spends billions of rupees each year on treating tobacco-related diseases, money that could otherwise be invested in improving healthcare infrastructure, education, or poverty

alleviation programs. "Tobacco is a leading cause of preventable diseases in Pakistan, including lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Every year, thousands of people die from tobacco-related illnesses, placing an enormous strain on the country's already overburdened healthcare system," comments Dr. Muhammad Taj, a pulmonologist serving in KP Health Department. "Most of patients are poor laborers who started smoking at a young age and by the time they come to us, they are in the advanced stages of lung disease," Dr. Taj told APP. Many tobacco users are the sole breadwinners for their families, and when they fall ill or die, their families are left in dire straits, he added. "Apart from inflicting economic burden, tobacco consumption is also threatening food crisis by bringing large portion of farm lands under cultivation," observed Waheed Ahmad, Patron in Chief of Pakistan Fruits and Vegetable Importers and Exporters Association. —APP

15 Changemakers to receive 'Pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' awards

With a strong focus on youth empowerment and development, the Metrix Pakistan Youth Summit 6th Edition aims to celebrate achievements while encouraging meaningful contributions to Pakistan's socio-economic progress

PESHAWAR: The Metrix Pakistan Youth Summit 6th Edition, in collaboration with the Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, will honor 15 distinguished individuals with the 'Pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Awards' on February 11 at the University of Agriculture, Peshawar. These awards recognize excellence and contributions across various fields, including innovation, entrepreneurship, sports, journalism, and social impact. The honorees include Ehsan Zaffar Abbasi (Young Pakistani Innovator), Aftab Ahmad (Founder & CEO, Assort Tech), Kashif Ali (Founder & CEO, TechKhw), Fayyaz Ahmed (Founder Director, Jinnah Basic Schools & Colleges Mansehra), Jamshed Burki (Travel Vlogger), Adnan Khan (Social Worker/Philanthropist), Zoha Malik Sher (CSS Officer), Huzafa Behram (CEO, LetsGrow), Iqra Wakeel Khan (Karate & Jujitsu Gold Medalist), Farzana Ali (Pakistani Journalist), Dr. Muhib Afridi (Founder & CEO, HKB Arena), Aqleem Orakzai (Mentor & Social Worker), Masoud Afridi (GTF Taekwondo International Champion), Aasiya Khan (Businesswoman & Former Minister), and Ubaidullah Khan (Martial Arts Champion). The Metrix Pakistan Youth Summit is anticipated to be one of the largest events of its kind in Pakistan, with an expected attendance of over 10,000 participants. It will host more than 100 exhibitors and 50+ national and international partners, representing diverse industries and sectors. The event will serve as a platform for youth engagement, networking, and knowledge exchange, featuring panel discussions, keynote speeches, and interactive sessions aimed at fostering entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, and leadership. Hassan Nisar, Founder & CEO of Metrix Pakistan, emphasized the summit's mission, stating that the Metrix Pakistan Youth Summit is more than just an event; it is a movement dedicated to recognizing and empowering individuals who are driving progress in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Pride of KP Awards highlight the extraordinary contributions of those who are shaping the future of the province. We are committed to providing a platform where young leaders, changemakers, and industry experts can collaborate, inspire, and create lasting impact. With a strong focus on youth empowerment and development, the Metrix Pakistan Youth Summit 6th Edition aims to celebrate achievements while encouraging meaningful contributions to Pakistan's socio-economic progress. —DNA

CDA, SGP to enhance cooperation for 3D mapping of Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Survey General of Pakistan (SGP) have agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation, particularly in acquiring advanced 3D maps and high-resolution imagery for Islamabad. In a meeting held on the other day, CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa and SGP Head Major General Rafiq Ur Rehman discussed leveraging SGP's technical capabilities for urban planning and development in the capital. SGP officials assured their readiness to provide cutting-edge digital mapping and real-time imagery with centimeter-level accuracy. Chairman Randhawa emphasized that these 3D maps and images would significantly enhance urban planning, improve lay-

out preparations, and help address various city challenges. He also highlighted their role in the early detection of land encroachments. Both organizations agreed to form technical teams to facilitate collaboration and ensure effective implementation.

Chairman Randhawa reaffirmed that CDA would greatly benefit from SGP's technical expertise and experience in geospatial mapping. Moreover, Capital Development Authority (CDA) has engaged KPMG, a global professional services firm, to provide con-

sultancy aimed at ensuring the financial feasibility and sustainability of various development projects in Islamabad. A KPMG delegation met with CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Saturday, with CDA Board members and senior officials also in

attendance. The meeting focused on devising the best financial strategies to make CDA projects viable and investment-friendly. Several proposals were discussed to enhance their long-term sustainability. Chairman Randhawa emphasized that the goal is to attract investment and drive Islamabad's development while ensuring that revenue generated from these projects is reinvested for the city's welfare. The discussion also covered plans to organize conferences and seminars to engage potential investors. KPMG will offer expert consultancy, technical assistance, and business models to optimize financial planning for CDA projects. Chairman Randhawa expressed confidence that KPMG's expertise will play a crucial role in making these initiatives financially robust and sustainable.



Farewell ceremony held to honor retiring ICT Police officers

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Security Division on Sunday organized a farewell ceremony to honour retiring officers, including Inspector Zahin Badshah, Constable Romail Khan, and Constable Sultan, for their dedicated service to the force. A police spokesperson told APP that the SP Judicial Protection Unit (JPU) attended the ceremony as a chief guest, while other senior police officers were also present on the occasion. The chief guest praised the services of the retiring officers, highlighting their dedication and hard work in serving Islamabad Police. He emphasized that their contributions will always be remembered in making Islamabad Police an exemplary force. —APP

Crackdown on professional beggars

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi have initiated a crackdown against professional beggars and managed to arrest 165 during last two days. According to a police spokesman, Police conducted operations against professional beggars and their facilitators in various areas, resulting in the arrest of 165 professional. —APP



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ICADRP, FJA sign MoU to enhance judicial capacity

The MoU was signed by Dr. Nudrat E. Piracha, CEO of ICADRP, and Mr. Hayat Ali Shah, Director General of FJA. This collaboration aims to strengthen ADR practices in Pakistan by integrating mediation and dispute resolution training into judicial education

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Centre for Appropriate Dispute Resolution and Prevention (ICADRP) and the Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance judicial capacity through research, education, and ADR training initiatives.



Govt transforms educational institutions with technology

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The recent transformation of public institutions in the federal capital through improved infrastructure, integration of modern technology, and an enhanced learning environment for the younger generation has marked a significant shift towards a more progressive education system.

days when a child simply read from a book while the teacher explained. Today's students come to class already exposed to a wealth of information, thanks to IT tools," he said.

external web links, which they can revisit at their convenience," he explained. He credited Federal Secretary Education, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, for setting targets across institutions to develop smart classrooms and replicate other modern facilities.

academics, the government is emphasizing physical fitness by developing open gyms and sports facilities in both boys' and girls' institutions. "Students actively participate in various sports competitions held in institutions, fostering a healthy lifestyle," Abbasi noted.

ESOLVE, UCP collaborate to advance space technology

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking move to strengthen space technology research and education in Pakistan, RESOLVE and the Space Research Center (SRC) at the University of Central Punjab (UCP) have partnered to foster innovation and bridge the gap between academia and industry.

Romina highlights wetlands' role in climate mitigation

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam has called for urgent action to safeguard the world's wetlands, emphasizing their significant role in environmental preservation, biodiversity, and combating impacts of climate change.

CIS bridges healthcare gap with telemedicine in rural areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Access to healthcare has always been a challenge for rural and underserved communities in Pakistan, where medical facilities are limited, and specialist care is often out of reach.

including consultations in ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) for treating infections and hearing issues, gynaecology for maternal and reproductive health, pediatrics for child health monitoring, dermatology for skin conditions, and general OPD services.

tients with specialists remotely has helped improve the quality of care we can offer." - Dr. Alina Tahir, Rural Healthcare Provider. The impact of CIS's expanded Tele-Health Centers extends beyond treatment.

Rawalpindi CPWB rescues 12,000 Children

DNA

ISLAMABAD: District Officer of the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) in Rawalpindi Rao Khalil Ahmed Sunday revealed that the Punjab Chief Minister is prioritizing child protection where a new child protection policy will be signed soon and over 12,000 children have so far been rescued and rehabilitated.

Advertisement for Pakistan Cybernetics and Information Technology Society (PCITS) featuring a logo and text in Urdu and English.

Briefs

Death anniversary of author Intizar observed

ISLAMABAD: The 9th death anniversary of renowned Pakistani author Intizar Hussain was observed on Sunday by paying glowing tributes through electronic, radio and social media platforms for his classical literary work. Born in India in 1925, literary icon Intizar Hussain gained wide recognition through his novels, short stories, poetry and non-fiction. He studied Urdu literature at a university in Meerut, India, and then moved to Lahore. His 1979 novel, "Basti" (town), was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize in 2013 after translation. It revolved around the subject of the subcontinent's partition. Intizar Hussain also remained associated with journalism as he kept on writing columns for leading newspapers till his death. He received several national and international awards including Sitara-i-Imtiaz from the government of Pakistan.—APP

A one pc cut in interest rates is unsatisfactory

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Saturday that the sixth cut in interest rates is welcome. Still, the pace of continuing interest rate reduction is slow because the central bank does not want to repeat past mistakes. The business community has been disappointed with only a one percent reduction in interest rates. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the State Bank had reduced the interest rate by one percent in the new monetary policy, after which this rate has come to 12 percent in the country. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said the sixth consecutive cut in interest rates since April last year is welcome. High interest rates have always been a hindrance to industrial and business activities. The business leader said that now that the economic conditions have greatly improved, the business community demands a four percent reduction in interest rates. Still, the central bank is acting cautiously in this regard. Mian Zahid Hussain said that interest rates in Pakistan are still higher than those in other countries in the region. In the recently bankrupt countries of Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal, interest rates are in single digits, while in Bangladesh, they are ten percent. However, in Pakistan, the interest rate is still in double digits, and there is still a lot of work to bring it to single digits.—APP

German embassy hosts annual alumni gathering in Islamabad

First Secretary Jan Gerald Krausser, Head of Communications and Cultural Affairs, set the stage with welcome remarks. His Excellency Alfred Grannas, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, took the opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions of the alumni in their respective fields

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The German Embassy in Islamabad hosted its annual Alumni gathering, bringing together a diverse group of scholars and fellows who have studied and conducted research in Germany. The event, attended by a large number of Alumni from prestigious programs such as the German Academic Exchange service (DAAD), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and the CrossCulture Program (CCP), provided a platform for them to reconnect and share their experiences. First Secretary Jan Gerald Krausser, Head of Communications and Cultural Affairs, set the stage with welcome remarks. His Excellency Alfred Grannas, Am-



bassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, took the opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions of the alumni in their respective fields. Ambassador Grannas emphasised, "I take pride in the friendships that our alumni have cultivated with Germany and its academic and research institutions. These connections are mutually beneficial as they bring together academic excellence from both countries. They stand as a shining example of German-Pakistani friendship and cooperation." The highlight of the event were presentations by DAAD alumnus Dr. Faisal Abbas of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Islamabad,

AvH alumna Dr Samina Mehnaz of Forman Christian College University (FCC) in Lahore and CCP alumna Dr Sumbal Shehbaz of the University of Lahore as well as by Mr Shakeel Imtiaz, alumnus of a training programme of the German Federal Foreign Office who currently works for the German Society of International Cooperation (GIZ). The event concluded with a meet-and-greet session around refreshments, allowing the alumni to reconnect and network with one another, forging new connections and renewing old friendships. Theatre and poetry performances with the participation of alumna Alina Chaudhary added a cultural note to the evening, leaving the attendees with fond memories of a memorable gathering.

Snow-clad Murree, Galyat, Leepa valleys proved irresistible to tourists

"The snowfall has added to the beauty of the area, and we are enjoying every moment of it." "The overall atmosphere in the area remained festive, with the tourists and locals alike seeming to enjoy the winter wonderland that Murree, Galyat and Leepa Valley had been transformed into

ISLAMABAD: As the weekend unfolded, the majestic hill stations of Murree, Galyat and Leepa Valleys were transformed into a breathtaking winter wonderland, with a thick blanket of snow casting a serene silence over the landscape, drawing in a tidal wave of tourists who flocked to the area to bask in the beauty of nature's frozen masterpiece. The snowfall, which ranged from 4 to 5 inches in different areas, turned the popular tourist destinations into a winter wonderland, with snow-clad trees, roads and buildings presenting a breathtaking sight, according to a report aired by PTV news channel. "We have had an unprecedented rush

of customers this weekend and our sales have skyrocketed," said the owner of a popular restaurant in Murree. "The snowfall has been a blessing for us as it has brought in a huge number of tourists who are eager to try our local cuisine," said Rashid, owner of a restaurant in Nathia Gali. "Our restaurant has been packed since Friday evening, and we are struggling to keep up with the demand," said the owner of a restaurant in Leepa Valley. "The weekend rush has been incredible, and we are thrilled to see so many tourists enjoying the beauty of Murree and Galyat," said owner of a restaurant in Murree Mall Road. However, the heavy snowfall also caused disruptions in normal life,

with many roads becoming impassable due to the accumulation of snow where to mitigate the problems faced by tourists and locals, the Galyat Development Authority (GDA) swung into action, taking emergency measures to ensure the smooth flow of traffic and provide necessary facilities to the visitors. "We have deployed heavy machinery, including snowplows and excavators to clear the snow from the roads," said a GDA official. "We have also sprinkled salt on the roads to prevent them from becoming slippery and ensure the safety of tourists." In addition to these measures, the GDA and Murree officials also established facilitation centers at various points, including

to provide assistance to the tourists. Despite the disruptions caused by the snowfall, the tourists seemed to be enjoying themselves, with many of them taking part in snowball fights, building snowmen and taking selfies with the snow-clad scenery providing a picturesque backdrop. "It's a wonderful experience," said a tourist from Lahore. "The snowfall has added to the beauty of the area, and we are enjoying every moment of it." "The overall atmosphere in the area remained festive, with the tourists and locals alike seeming to enjoy the winter wonderland that Murree, Galyat and Leepa Valley had been transformed into.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Families are enjoying sports cars and bikes during "Centaurus Automotive Show 2025" in Federal Capital.

Rawalpindi's breakfast culture continues

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 savoury 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 flavours, and its breakfast offerings are truly exceptional.'" "I visited Kartarpura with friends and we were all blown away by the nihari taste and the prices are reasonable, and the flavours are out of this world", he added. Another visitor Umer Khan shared his experience and said "Rawalpindi's traditional breakfast is a must-try for any food enthusiast". He said the halwa puri, kebabs, and nihari are absolute perfection. He further said, "I was amazed by the variety and quality of breakfast options in Rawalpindi". As the city awakens each morning, the streets come alive with the mesmerizing aromas of traditional breakfast. Whether you're a foodie or simply looking for a delicious start to your day, Rawalpindi's traditional breakfast scene is an experience not to be missed, he added.—APP

Electric buses win accolades from civil society

ISLAMABAD: Civil society organizations and environmental activists have welcomed the government's decision to introduce electric buses in Islamabad, terming it a "significant step" towards reducing air pollution and promoting sustainable transportation. These electric busses have been operated on 13 routes including Faizabad to Nust Metro Station, Faizabad to Allama Iqbal Open University, Pak Secretariat to Kachhari Metro Station, National Library to Pims Metro Station. Similarly, other routes include Pims to Bari Imam, D12 from Nust Metro Station, Pims to Nust Metro Station, Pims to Golra Sharif, Abpara to Tiramari, Khanna Pul to Nellore, Faizabad to Peer Wadhai Mor, Golra Mor to Wah Cantt and routes from Golra Mor to I-16 are included. Environmental expert Muneer Ahmed said the electric buses will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment. "We have been advocating for eco-friendly transportation solutions for years, and it's heartening to see the government taking concrete steps in this direction," he stated. A commuter Ameen Faheem said, "The electric bus is a game-changer for me adding that I can finally enjoy a peaceful commute without the noise and pollution of traditional buses." Electric buses can significantly improve public health by reducing exposure to air pollutants and noise pollution.—APP

FBR foils attempt to game FCAS

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Customs has successfully foiled an attempt to game the Faceless Customs Assessment System (FCAS), a newly launched system for speedy and quality assessments. Such an attempt was quite expected and the Karachi Customs team, tasked with its operations, was directed by FBR to exercise constant vigilance in this regard, said a news release here on Saturday. Those who attempted to game FCAS have been taken to task. Customs licences of 45 agents found involved in the gaming attempt have been suspended by Karachi Customs and show cause notices have been issued in the light of Customs Agents Rules.

An Appraising officer found to connive in this attempt was placed under suspension by FBR yesterday and formal inquiry has been initiated against him under the Efficiency and Discipline Rules. A criminal case has also been lodged against the culprits including agents, appraising officer, and some private persons who were found involved in the attempt of gaming the FCAS. A team of investigators has been constituted and three persons have already been arrested. Raids are being conducted to arrest the remaining culprits and bring them to justice. FCAS is working smoothly with no backlog of Customs clearances. The system is being hailed as a game changer in the Customs clearances by the stakeholders and was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Pakistan about two weeks ago.—DNA

World Wetlands Day observed

ISLAMABAD: The World Wetlands Day 2025 was observed on Sunday under the theme 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future'. The day was observed every year to raise public awareness about the need to promote the conservation and restoration of wetlands, while preventing the rapid decline of wetlands. The United Nations had decided on 30th August 2021 to observe Wetlands Day worldwide on 2nd February of every year. It was also a day to commemorate the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in Ramsar in 1971. The Convention aims to enable nations to take the necessary steps for the conservation and sustainable use of their watersheds through the declaration of protected areas, implementation of effective policies and exchange of knowledge. The convention has been ratified by a total of 172 countries so far and it required the party states to include at least one watershed in the list of wetlands of international importance (or Ramsar sites). Currently, Nepal's Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Rara Lake, Mai Pokhari, Phoksundo Lake, Bisahajari Lake, Ghodaghodi Lake, Gosainkund Lake, Gokyo Lake, Jagdishpur Reservoir and Pokhara Valley and a group of nine lakes in the area are included in the Ramsar List.—APP

Bilawal's vision has become reality, as Sindh rapidly progressing

CM has played a pivotal role in monitoring and overseeing the execution of various initiatives, Equally commendable is the contribution of CS whose administrative expertise has been in turning ambitious plans into reality

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



THE leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), has ushered in a new era of progress and transformation in Sindh. His vision centers on providing essential services such as healthcare, education, clean drinking water, and an improved road network while ensuring the quality of develop-

ment projects. Under his guidance, the provincial administration has taken concrete steps to turn aspirations into reality, proving that development in Sindh is not merely confined to paper but is visibly taking shape on the ground. One of the most notable achievements under Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's leadership is the remarkable progress in the healthcare sector. Sindh has emerged as a leader among Pakistan's provinces in terms of healthcare infrastructure and service delivery. The provincial government has launched numerous initiatives to improve medical facilities, ensuring that even remote areas have access to quality healthcare. State-of-the-art hospitals and medical centers have been established in both urban and rural areas, reducing the disparity in healthcare access. Free medical treatment programs have been introduced to assist the underprivileged population. Investments in advanced medical

equipment and training programs for healthcare professionals have significantly enhanced service delivery. These developments collectively demonstrate Sindh's commitment to prioritizing the health and well-being of its citizens. Education is another sector where Sindh has made notable strides. The provincial government has undertaken comprehensive reforms to improve the quality of education, increase school enrollment rates, and reduce dropout rates. Schools across Sindh have been modernized with upgraded infrastructure, well-trained teachers, and improved curricula. The government has also placed a strong emphasis on higher education, establishing new universities and research institutions to nurture academic excellence. Scholarships and financial aid programs have been introduced to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring that education is accessible

to all. These measures have led to a significant improvement in literacy rates and academic performance across the province. A robust road network is crucial for economic development and connectivity. Under Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's vision, Sindh has witnessed a major transformation in its infrastructure, particularly in the expansion and improvement of its road network. Roads and highways have been constructed and renovated, efficiently linking cities, towns, and villages. This has not only made travel easier but has also facilitated trade, commerce, and overall economic activity. Better roads have enabled farmers to transport their agricultural produce to markets more efficiently, boosting the rural economy. Improved connectivity has encouraged investment and tourism in various parts of the province. The seamless transportation system has also enhanced access to healthcare and education, thereby up-

lifting the overall quality of life for Sindh's residents. Access to clean drinking water remains a fundamental right, and the Sindh government has taken substantial steps to address this need. Recognizing the importance of safe drinking water for public health, the administration has initiated projects to install ultra-filtration and reverse osmosis (RO) water plants across the province. Many of these plants are already operational, providing purified water to millions of residents. The government has also implemented stringent measures to monitor and maintain water quality. The successful implementation of these development projects is the result of a well-coordinated effort by the provincial leadership and administration. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has played a pivotal role in monitoring and overseeing the execution of various initiatives. His proactive approach has ensured that projects are

completed efficiently and effectively. Equally commendable is the contribution of Chief Secretary Syed Asif Hyder Shah, whose administrative expertise has been instrumental in turning ambitious plans into reality. His strategic oversight and governance skills have facilitated smooth project execution, addressing bureaucratic challenges and streamlining processes. Secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners, and engineers have made significant contributions to Sindh's development. Their collective efforts have reinforced the province's ability to implement and sustain large-scale development projects. A long-standing wrong perception has been that development efforts in Sindh exist only on paper and do not translate into tangible progress. The recent strides in healthcare, education, infrastructure, and clean water provision have successfully debunked this notion. The province's leadership has

demonstrated a commitment to transparency and accountability, ensuring that allocated resources are utilized effectively. The development initiatives in Sindh have had far-reaching economic and social benefits. The improved road network has stimulated economic activity, enabling businesses to thrive and creating job opportunities. Enhanced healthcare facilities have led to better health outcomes, reducing mortality rates and improving overall productivity. The vision of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, coupled with the dedicated efforts of the Sindh government, has transformed the province's development landscape. The progress made in healthcare, education, infrastructure, and water supply is a testament to the effectiveness of their leadership and governance. While challenges remain, the ongoing commitment to development continues to drive Sindh toward a brighter and more prosperous future.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Multipolarity and world peace

2025 will be a year of geopolitical turmoil. What lies ahead may be the US' continued attempt to maintain a unipolar world against the tide of multipolarity. The gloves are off, and it will be up to the major capitals of the Global South to contain the adventurism of the US Deep State and its vassals. What will the Global South, and its main representatives— Beijing, Moscow, Brasilia, Delhi, Ankara, Tehran — do to fortify the trend of multipolarity? BRICS, with the recent addition of Indonesia as a full member and Nigeria as a partner member, will be at the forefront of this battle for influence between a bellicose, moralist West and a pacifist, pragmatic South. The members of BRICS will have to work hard in the media battlefield to defuse the idea that it is a movement positioned "against the West," but rather an alternative to a deficient international order, open to all sovereign states who share the ideals of multipolarity: a few strong states that will stabilize politically and enrich economically the regions around them, and interact with the other regional power centers of the world. This is what Carl Schmitt envisioned in his seminal book *The Nomos of the Earth*, written during World War II: a partition of the planet between regional *Grossräume* (great space, spheres of influence) centered around powerful centers that control their space. This year's SCO meeting will be a much-needed exercise in coordination among SCO members, following the developments in Ukraine under the Donald Trump administration, to prevent any attempt to break the strategic partnership between the two Eurasian superpowers, China and Russia. The shift to multipolarity has become urgently needed, as the Bretton Woods institutions, and the UN in particular, have shown their shortcomings in every single conflict around the world over the past 20 years, and their increasing irrelevance in fostering and nurturing peace and prosperity. In 2025, we should expect the situation to get worse before it gets better. Their reluctance to being reformed, to become more representative of the evolutions of the world order, and to embrace the emergence of new powers, makes multipolarity a necessity for more than 7 billion of people who are not part of the Golden Billion in the West.



Trump greenlights Palestinians genocide

FEW can doubt that the Biden administration's legacy on Palestine was a controversial one. Fewer still, could have expected that anyone could "trump him" after he brazenly greenlighted billions of dollars of military aid to "Israel" and remained indifferent to the destruction, decimation, and deprivation of Palestinians under occupation. However, days after his predecessor took office, Biden has been truly 'trumped' and that too by Donald Trump himself. The 47th President of the United States has adopted a knee-jerk, parochial, bigoted, and nativist stance on Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territories, which not only greenlights Palestinian extermination but deliberately enables it through state sponsorship. With such policies being implemented, the Trump era spells further doom and gloom for Palestinians. The international community should not remain silent to such crass approval of apartheid. Here's why: Among a slew of executive orders that Trump passed since assuming office such as enabling a mass deportation drive, revoking birthright citizenship, closing the border with Mexico, and proclaiming a national emergency to prevent mass immigration, is the draconian lifting of sanctions on Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territories. This includes 30 settler groups which were previously sanctioned by the Biden administration and prevented from accessing the American financial system, purchasing American property, or owning American assets. The sanctions also target organizations such as Amana Ltd, who are notorious for violent and extremist activity against the Palestinians on their own land. The broad consensus of the international community is that Israeli settlements, instrumentalized by the Zionist regime since the 1967 war, are illegal colonies built on Palestinian land. These settlements mirror the creation of Bantustans in Apartheid South Africa by the white minority government which targeted the majority Black African population as a racially segregated population. Regardless of their controversial reputation, however, Israeli settlements have proliferated since 1967 with subsidies granted and political support extended by the Israeli government to ensure that the business enterprise thrives through the plundering of Palestinian lands, farms, children, and women. As per Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, these settlements violate international law with the destruction of private or state-owned property of an occupied population constituting a war crime. This is also stated by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and many other national laws. Barring mild condemnation however, the United States made no effort to uphold the settlement enterprise where varsities, such as Ariel University, which were built by expelling Palestinians and disbarring them from accessing their own land, continued unabated. This allowed "Israel" to deflect international criticism and ignore rulings and advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice on the enterprise. American castigation of Israeli settlement adventurism has also been limited to academic and civil society advocacy instead of Congress officially sanctioning the Israeli state for enabling it.

Balochistan's war within: A nation's failure or fate?

Qamar Bashir



Every loss in this conflict—whether a Baloch fighter, a civilian, or an army jawan—is a loss for Pakistan. We are not fighting an external enemy; we are fighting our own people. The grief of a mother in Quetta or Gwadar is no different from that of a mother in Rawalpindi or Lahore. The pain of losing a son, a brother, or a father transcends geography, ethnicity, or political beliefs. Yet, this tragedy unfolds because decision-making has been taken away from genuine civilian leaders—those who understand governance, dialogue, and compromise—and handed over to unaccountable forces whose primary tool is military might

THE latest ISPR press release, announcing the killing of 23 alleged terrorists and the loss of 18 Frontier Corps personnel, is deeply distressing. These are not just numbers; they represent 41 shattered families, each bearing an unimaginable grief that will last a lifetime. Behind every fallen soldier and every slain insurgent are grieving parents, siblings, spouses, and children, struggling to fill the void left by their loss. What makes this tragedy even more painful is that these lives were lost not in defense against an external enemy but in an internal conflict, one that pits fellow Pakistanis against each other. Every loss on both sides is ultimately a loss for the nation. For any Pakistani who values human life and dignity, the relentless cycle of violence and extremism is deeply unsettling. This conflict has become an endless spiral of bloodshed, with security forces and alienated Baloch elements locked in a battle that offers no real resolution—only more suffering, more funerals, and more hatred. These individuals, regardless of which side they are on, belong to the same nation. Yet, their deaths only deepen existing divisions rather than resolve the underlying tensions. As a nation, we must step back and reflect on what has brought us to this tragic point. Why are Pakistani citizens fighting against the state? What drives this level of discontent that entire communities feel alienated enough to take up arms? The answer lies not in simplistic narratives of terrorism or separatism but in decades of political, economic, and social neglect. The state's continued reliance on military force has only exacerbated the problem, fueling resentment and widening the rift between the center and the periphery. History has already provided its verdict: force alone does not work. The lessons of Bangladesh remain unheeded—decades after its separation, the scars of that conflict persist. The resentment against Pakistan's military and bureaucracy in Bangladesh has not faded, and those wounds have been passed down across generations. Hatred, once embedded in a people's consciousness, does not dissipate easily. It festers, it grows, and it transforms into resistance. The Baloch and Pashtun societies, known for their traditions of hospitality, communal harmony, and unwavering commitment to protecting their land and dignity, should be seen as assets, not adversaries. Yet, the persistent attempt to

subdue their will through force continues. This strategy has failed time and again. No military strength, however overwhelming, can crush a people's inherent determination to safeguard their identity, heritage, and rights. There are only two possible paths forward. One is built on peace, respect, and the acknowledgment that these communities have the right to live with dignity, preserving their tribal traditions and culture while being made stakeholders in Pakistan's progress. The other is one of continued repression, subjugation, and state violence, which will only fuel further bloodshed, deepen resistance, and ultimately undermine national unity. The logical and humane choice is clear: Pakistan must respect the dignity and honor of these communities, recognize their unique identity, and treat them as valuable citizens, not as problems to be "handled." Every loss in this conflict—whether a Baloch fighter, a civilian, or an army jawan—is a loss for Pakistan. We are not fighting an external enemy; we are fighting our own people. The grief of a mother in Quetta or Gwadar is no different from that of a mother in Rawalpindi or Lahore. The pain of losing a son, a brother, or a father transcends geography, ethnicity, or political beliefs. Yet, this tragedy unfolds because decision-making has been taken away from genuine civilian leaders—those who understand governance, dialogue, and compromise—and handed over to unaccountable forces whose primary tool is military might. These elements, operating without a public mandate, view every problem through the lens of armed conflict rather than reconciliation. Violence breeds more violence, deepens hatred, and creates generational wounds that may never heal. For every insurgent killed, more rise in defiance. Why? Because force alone has never been a solution to political grievances. The state must ask itself: why are these young men taking up arms? Why do they feel they have no stake in Pakistan's future? The answer lies in decades of economic exploitation, political exclusion, and a lack of basic human rights. Had Pakistan's civilian leadership been genuinely empowered, many peaceful solutions could have been explored. Instead of plundering Balochistan's resources for the benefit of central authorities, the region should be given its fair share of revenue from minerals, gas, and ports. Balochistan contributes over \$1 billion annually in natural gas revenues alone, yet remains Pakistan's most under-

developed province. Investment in industries, infrastructure, healthcare, and quality education could uplift the region instead of fueling resentment. With over 71% of Balochistan's population living in poverty, these are urgent needs. Empowering local leadership to govern their own affairs, rather than imposing decisions from Islamabad or Rawalpindi, would foster trust and engagement. A structured economic reform to curb smuggling and the illicit arms trade could also weaken extremist factions by cutting off their financial and logistical support. Nothing radicalizes a population more than the disappearance of its youth. Reports indicate that thousands of Baloch men have vanished, only for their bodies to be found later, igniting further anger. A transparent judicial process, rather than extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances, is the way forward. When people lose faith in the justice system, they resort to desperate measures. The cycle of oppression and retaliation continues because the state has refused to address grievances through democratic means. Balochistan does not need more military operations; it needs justice, respect, and development. The only way to win back hearts and minds is to treat the people of Balochistan as equal Pakistanis, with the same rights, opportunities, and representation as any other citizen. Balochistan must not be treated as a colony from which resources are extracted while its people remain impoverished and disenfranchised. The region must be developed with the same urgency and commitment as Punjab or Sindh. It is time to break this destructive cycle. Pakistan must move beyond a militarized response and address the real, underlying causes of this conflict—political representation, economic equity, and social justice. Only through meaningful dialogue, empowerment, and respect for the dignity of these communities can a sustainable and peaceful resolution be achieved. This is a moment of reckoning for Pakistan. Will we continue down the path of military oppression and bloodshed, repeating the mistakes of 1971? Or will we finally choose wisdom over force, justice over repression, and dialogue over violence? The choice is ours. The consequences will be ours as well.

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

Scope of religious tourism in Pakistan

Gazala Anbreen

Holy places of Hindus are there in the form of Katas Raj temple and temple of Tilla Jogian, an abandoned Hindu temple located in the salt range in Punjab which is the Jerusalem of Hindus. Hinglaj Devi Temple is there in Hinglaj which is a town on Makran Coast in Baluchistan in Hingol National Park, a natural park with an area of 6,000 square kilometres. Approximately 40,000 followers of Hinduism come here in the month of April. We have to devise the policies through which international tourism can be promoted

TOURISM is a great industry. Whole world earns billions of dollars through this but Pakistan is unable in marketing it effectively. Many important holy places belonging to Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hindu religion are there in Pakistan. Lots of potential of religious tourism is there but infrastructure is not developed to a considerable extent to exploit the historical and religious tourism. Therefore, awareness must be spread that religious tourism can also be tapped as a sector of economy. Unfortunately, very few of us and the people from the outside world know that there are so many sacred places belonging to different religions in Pakistan. Take the case of Taxila. Taxila is a very important place for Buddhist religion. Hundreds of thousands of foreigners visit Taxila museum every year. We can take impressions of these tourists as what they think for improving tourism in Pakistan and harness efforts towards that direction for making tourism flourish still further there and all over Pakistan in general. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism contributed to 3.7 % of Pakistan's GDP in 2021. India accounted for 1.47% of the World's international tourist in 2022 while in the year 2024 Travel and Tourism Development Index ranked Pakistan 101st out of 119 countries. In the South Asian countries India has a share of 70 percent in the field of tourism while Pakistan has only a meagre 5.5 percent share. When you think of Pharaohs you think of Egypt. Khana Kaaba is a place all over the world revered deeply by every Muslim from heart and soul. Same feeling is there in the hearts of Buddhists and people of other religions for their holy sites in Pakistan. If we promote religious tourism, it would link Pakistan with the rest of the world. Historical places like Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and Taxila are rich cultural heritage areas in Pakistan.

Saudi Arab and Iran are employing efforts to promote historical tourism. Saudis are conducting excavations relating to ancient Islamic history. Iran is also employing efforts to promote historical tourism. In Pakistan attention should be focused in this area to attract tourists. Tourism is important for fostering interfaith harmony. If we work on promoting religious tourism then it can be important for maintaining the world peace also. It is quite obvious that when we value other religions and their holy places then they are likely to reciprocate in the same vein and respect our religion. We must be the custodians of our national cultural heritage in the true spirit. For increasing interfaith harmony religious tourism must be included as an important component by ministry of religious affairs. It is necessary for promoting the soft image of the country and would be helpful in bringing revenue generation. However, focus should be on provision of more of the facilities, like online visa, construction of hotels nearby holy sites and most importantly ensuring security to the devotees who visit Pakistan hailing from different places of the world. Every year thousands of Sikhs and Buddhists come to Pakistan for visiting their sacred places. In Sri Lanka tooth of Buddha is placed in a gold Lotus flower inside multiple gold boxes in the Temple of the Tooth. That is open rarely for public viewing. Pakistan has sacred assets of Buddhist religion. It is the only country in the world that has two teeth of Mahatma Buddha which are safe in Taxila museum. But how much we promote this is evident to all. Holy places of Hindus are there in the form of Katas Raj temple and temple of Tilla Jogian, an abandoned Hindu temple located in the salt range in Punjab which is the Jerusalem of Hindus. Hinglaj Devi Temple is there in Hinglaj which is a town on Makran

Coast in Baluchistan in Hingol National Park, a natural park with an area of 6,000 square kilometres. Approximately 40,000 followers of Hinduism come here in the month of April. We have to devise the policies through which international tourism can be promoted. Approximately 80 to 90 percent source of information the youth get is from the social media. We have to filter the information in the social media and produce a digital content which attracts the youth and people of different religions. Pakistani embassies abroad can play an effective role in this respect. One suggestion is that a tourist corridor can be made from Wahgah to Katas Raj temple. Likewise, modern facilities can be provided at the sites of holy places of different religions. A temple of Mahatma Buddha can be built in Islamabad which can be a source of attraction for 506 million Buddhists from different parts of the world. Monks can be invited so that they can impart teachings related to Mahatma Buddha to their younger ones. This step will be helpful in increasing religious harmony. We have a 9,000 years old history. We have to project these historical sites in the international market. Millions of visitors can come from countries like Japan, Thailand, Korea, China. Sri Lanka and Bhutan where Buddhism is predominantly a major religion. Nankana Sahib is the birth place of Guru Nanak and he died in Kartarpur Narowal. Both places are located in Pakistan. Sikh pilgrims are passionate followers of Baba Guru Nanak and visit Pakistan every year in great numbers. These two cities can be made the golden temples and every year hundreds of thousands of Sikhs can come here. Promoting religious tourism can be an effective step in not only inviting revenue but will also be instrumental in evoking the soft, liberal and forward-looking image of Pakistan all across the world.

Briefs

Naqvi warns of action over PTI's 'Feb 8...'

FROM PAGE 01
Peshawar on the same day to observe Black Day. Meanwhile, PTI leader Aliya Hamza submitted an application on January 29 to the deputy commissioner's office in Lahore, seeking approval from the local administration for a public gathering at Minar-e-Pakistan, also known as Iqbal Park. PTI's decision to return to street politics comes amid its negotiations with the government—talks that now appear to have collapsed after PTI refused to attend the fourth round of discussions on January 28. The party cited the government's failure to form a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 riots and November 2024 protests as outlined in its charter of demands.

PTI to march towards...

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, PTI's preparations for Swabi rally are in full swing. According to party sources, all leaders have been instructed to mobilise workers, with each Khyber Pakhtunkhwa MNA tasked to bring at least 500 supporters. To ease financial strain on leaders, workers have been asked to arrange their own transport. Additionally, every national and provincial assembly member has been given specific tasks to ensure the event's success. PTI workers from Punjab will also be invited to participate.

Lawyers announce march...

FROM PAGE 01
All lawyers fully support the struggle of journalists," he stated. LHCBA former president Rabia Bajwa said that there was a clear division among lawyers — one faction stood with the powers that be, while the other stood with the Constitution — and "we are with the faction standing with the Constitution and law. "We salute the brave judges of the IHC; we condemned the action against SCBA Secretary Salman Mansoor who stood up to protect the Constitution," she added. Senator Hamid Khan said that the lawyers' movement had started and it would sweep away the 26th Amendment. "Our struggle is moving forward. Lawyers' organisations have filed petitions against the 26th Amendment. The full court consisting of the current 16 judges should hear these petitions," he demanded.

Islamabad lawyers to boycott...

FROM PAGE 01
boycott all judicial proceedings while urging all lawyers across country to stand behind this move. Meanwhile, he also criticized the judicial commission session of February 10. Islamabad High Court Bar Association President Riasat Ali Azad said the decision of boycott was a unanimous one. He raised serious objection to the recent transfer and said why a LHC judge was being brought into IHC. District Bar Association President Naeem Ali Gujjar said the lawyers community has a history standing for the strength of legal rights. He deplored that political parties always forgot their past and worked against the interest of legal community.

4 Levies personnel...

FROM PAGE 01
conduct of separate operations in Balochistan. As many as 18 Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers also embraced martyrdom during the Mangocher operation — on the night between January 31 and February 1 — when terrorists had attempted to establish roadblocks in the area. Reacting to the Balochistan operations, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir vowed terrorist outfits, controlled by foes disguised as friends.



ISLAMABAD: Participants competes during the Archery Recurve Mixed during the 2nd Students Games 2025 at Liaquat Gymnasium in Federal Capital. — Online

Asensio set for Villa loan, Rashford to have medical

Asensio, 29, has scored seven goals in 47 appearances for PSG since joining from Real Madrid in the summer of 2023, helping the club win the French title in 2024

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Aston Villa are set to sign Spain midfielder Marco Asensio on loan from Paris St-Germain until the end of the season. Meanwhile, Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford is scheduled to have a medical at Villa before completing a loan move to the Midlands club. It is not clear when the deals for both players will be completed but Villa are expected to have the pair in before the January transfer window closes on Monday at 23:00 GMT. Villa have already signed Spanish full-back Andres Garcia from Levante and Netherlands forward Donyell Malen from Borussia Dortmund in January, and they sold Colombia striker Jhon Duran to Saudi Pro League side Al-Nassr in a £71m deal. Asensio, 29, has scored seven goals in 47 appearances for PSG since joining from Real Madrid in the summer of 2023, helping the club win the French title in 2024. He has also had spells at Mallorca and Espanyol, as well as earning 38 caps for Spain. Boss Unai Emery said his side "need new players" following Saturday's 2-0 defeat at Wolves, which left the club eighth in the Premier League. The Midlands club finished in the top eight of the new Champions League group stage to qualify for the last 16. Meanwhile, Manchester United



have signed Denmark defender Patrick Dorgu from Lecce on a five-and-a-half-year deal. The deal for the 20-year-old is worth £25m (30m euros), with a potential £4.1m (5m euros) in add-ons. Dorgu has made 57 appearances for Lecce since his senior debut at the start of last season, having joined the club at youth level in 2022. "I am incredibly proud to be able to call myself a Manchester United player - this is a very special day for my

whole family," said Dorgu. "I cannot wait to work with Ruben Amorim. His vision for this team and the future of the club is incredibly exciting. There is a clear plan set out for my development, and I feel that Manchester United is the perfect place to fulfil my potential and complete my huge ambitions." Talks over a loan move for United's Dutch full-back Tyrell Malacia, 25, to join Portuguese club Benfica have broken down. Meanwhile, Red Devils striker Marcus Rashford is scheduled to have a medical at Aston Villa before completing a loan move to the Midlands club. Rashford has not featured for United since being dropped by head coach Ruben Amorim for the Manchester derby on 12 December. Dorgu is the second defender to arrive at Old Trafford this transfer window, following England Under-19s international Ayden Heaven's move from Arsenal. After progressing through the Denmark youth sides Dorgu made his senior debut as a late substitute against Switzerland in the Nations League in September, scoring with his first touch in a 2-0 win. Technical director Jason Wilcox said: "Patrick is a really exciting talent. His strong defensive and attacking attributes, adaptability and work-rate will make him a key part of Ruben Amorim's squad. "Patrick has had a superb start to his career, and at the age of just 20 we know he will continue to develop under the guidance of our excellent coaching team."

Ponting, Shastri pick Champions Trophy finalists

'The other team that is playing some really good cricket at the moment is Pakistan,' says Ponting

WEB DESK

LAHORE: Former cricketers Ricky Ponting and Ravi Shastri named ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 finalists India and Australia to headline the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan from February 19 to March 9. The duo of Ponting and Shastri, predicted the two former champions as the firm contenders for the marquee clash, based on their recent performances in major tournaments and star-studded lineups. "It's hard to go past India and Australia again," Ponting told the ICC Review. "Just think about the quality of players in both countries right now, and you look back in recent history when these big finals and big ICC events have come around and inevitably Australia and India are there somewhere." Shastri also named England and South Africa as the other two semi-finalists but remained confident in World Cup 2023 runners-up to go all the way in the eight-team tournament. But Ponting believes that hosts Pakistan, who are fresh from historic series victories over Australia and South Africa can pose a major challenge for the final two spots. "The other team that is playing some really good cricket at the moment is Pakistan," said Ricky Ponting. "Their one-day cricket over the last little bit has been absolutely outstanding. "We know they're not always the most predictable team in those big tournaments, but they seem like they've sorted things out a little bit." The Champions Trophy 2025, 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.

Jey Uso wins men's Royal Rumble 2025

INDIANAPOLIS: Former Intercontinental champion Jey Uso on Saturday, achieved a significant milestone in his World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) career as he outclassed 29 other superstars to win the men's Royal Rumble 2025. The enthralling high-stakes match came down to Jey and retiring legend John Cena, who is planning to conclude his glittering career on a high. Cena appeared to have taken an early advantage over Jey as he attempted to throw him over the ropes, assuming he had pulled off the victory, but the former tag-team champion clung on. The two wrestlers then exchanged punches at the ring apron until Jey hit a super kick to Cena to make him unsettle. But Cena soon tried to hit back by locking Jey in his signature move, Attitude Adjustment, only for the latter to counter and sneak back into the ring, leaving Cena in a difficult position. Jey Uso was quick to react and pushed the 16-time champion off the ring to seal a massive victory. Meanwhile in the women's event, returning Charlotte Flair made her shock return to win the Royal Rumble for the second time. — Agencies

Champions Trophy Gambhir downplays hype around Pakistan-India clash

'I think five games, all the games are important,' says Gautam Gambhir

WEB DESK

MUMBAI: India's head coach Gautam Gambhir on Saturday, downplayed the hype around their high-octane ICC Champions Trophy 2025 clash against arch-rivals Pakistan, set to be played in Dubai on February 23. Gambhir, while speaking at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) annual awards here on Saturday, asserted that the two-time champions are focused on winning the title instead of just one match. "Look, we don't go to the Champions Trophy thinking that the 23rd is the most important game for us. I think five games, all the games are important," said Gambhir at the annual BCCI awards. "The mission to go to Dubai is to win the Champions Trophy, not only win one particular game. But yes, if that is one game in the middle of winning the Champions Trophy, we're going to try and take it as seriously as possible." "And more importantly, I think when two countries, India and Pakistan, play against each other, obviously the emotions are really high, but ultimately the contest remains the same." Highlighting the intensity of competition in the eight-team tournament, Gambhir noted that there is less margin of error in the Champions Trophy and every match is important for a title bid. "Champions Trophy is a completely different challenge



as compared to the 50-over World Cup because literally every game is a make-or-break, so you can't stop anywhere in this tournament," Gambhir noted. "So hopefully we're going to start off really well, because ultimately, if you want to go on and win the competition, you have to win five games." The Indian head coach further expressed his confidence in the senior duo of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli to "play a massive role" in the tournament. "I think both Rohit and Virat, they add so much value to the dressing room. They add so much value to Indian cricket as well. They've got to play a massive role (in the Champions Trophy)," Gambhir said. "And I've said it before as well, those guys are so hungry, they want to play for the country. They have the passion to play for the country and deliver for the country," he concluded. For the unversed, 2013 champions India will start their Champions Trophy 2025 campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 before taking on defending champions Pakistan on February 23. The men in blue will play their last group-stage fixture against New Zealand on March 2.

India thump SA to win Women's U19 T20 World Cup

India win their second consecutive ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup title

WEB DESK

KUALA LUMPUR: Gongadi Trisha backed her economical bowling figures of 3/15 with an unbeaten 44 to power India to crush South Africa and win the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup here at the Bayuemas Oval on Sunday. Opting to bat first, South Africa could only accumulate 82 runs before getting bowled out in 20 overs. Middle-order batter Mieke van Voorst remained the top-scorer for the Proteas with an 18-ball 23 while opening batter Jemma Botha (16), Fay Cowling (15) and Karabo Meso (10) were the other batters to amass double digits. Trisha was the standout bowler for India with three wickets, followed by Parunika Sisodia, Aayushi Shukla and Vaishnavi Sharma, who took two wickets each, while Shabnam

Shakil made one scalp. In response, India comfortably chased down the modest 83-run target for the loss of just one wicket and 52 balls to spare. Leading the way for them was opening batter Trisha, who

smashed eight boundaries on her way to a 33-ball 44 and top-scored for India. She was supported by Sanika Chalke, who made 26 net out from 22 deliveries, hitting four boundaries. For her all-round brilliance

in the final, Gongadi Trisha was adjudged the Player of the Match. The all-rounder also bagged the Player of the Tournament for her consistent performances, which saw her accumulating 309 runs and taking seven wickets. "Means everything to me, right now not able to say anything. Thank everyone for supporting me. [My] plan was to always focus on my strengths, did the same thing today as well. Always look up to Mithali di," said Trisha. "Would like to dedicate this to my dad who is here. Always consider myself as an all-rounder. Goal is to play for the country and win more matches," she added. For South Africa, Kayla Reyneke was the lone wicket-taker. For the unversed, India clinched the title without losing a single match in the tournament and thus successfully defended the ICC Women's T20 World Cup crown, which they won two years ago under Shafali Verma's captaincy.



Pakistan-Iran Gas Pipeline...

FROM PAGE 01
The Governor General of Iran's Khorasan Razavi Province, Gholam Hossein Mozaffari, met Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan on Saturday and discussed matters pertaining to promotion of trade between the two countries. The Punjab governor welcomed assurance of Governor General Mozaffari for reducing the visa fee for Pakistani visitors. The governors also discussed promoting mining and petroleum sectors and exchange of business delegations.

PM Shehbaz launches...

FROM PAGE 01
This year, only one case was reported, he said, and expressed the resolve to eradicate polio at all costs, with dedicated team work and support from the international partners. The prime minister also expressed the hope that with international coordination and support, the crippling disease in the neighbouring brotherly country Afghanistan would end. He appreciated all the international partners including WHO, Unicef, Bill Gates Foundation and the brotherly country Saudi Arabia for their commitment and efforts to the government in its efforts to eliminate polio.

Govt considers...

FROM PAGE 01
Thar coal, wind, solar, transmission and nuclear, Wapda hydel and Neelum-Jhelum projects. Currently, the government allocates \$3 billion for debt servicing through end-consumer tariffs, which translates to Rs8.63 per unit in capacity charges within electricity tariffs. The 9-page paper on reforms in the power sector points out the government is trying hard to re-profile the loans by increasing debt payment tenure to achieve relief of Rs5.1 per unit. The paper says re-financing interest-bearing circular debt through sovereign debt, making it public debt, will reduce tariff in the range of Rs3.23 per kWh (for non-protected consumers), which increases to Rs3.78 per kWh after tax.

Syria's Al-Jolani...

FROM PAGE 01
was engaged in talks with the US and European partners to help lift economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic that have left the country's economy decimated. However, concerns over al-Sharraf's past membership of al-Qaeda have tempered support from some quarters, even as Syria's new leadership emphasises regional integration and protections for religious and ethnic minorities.

'Italian Trade Agency...

FROM PAGE 01
Dr. Salvatore Parano said climate change is affecting the business around the world but Pakistan is a potential country for production of Buffalo Mozzarella (cheese) which is an important ingredient in world pizza industry including olive cultivation and food processing. He added that Olive farming is also ideal because of sunny climate and soil in Baluchistan and Pothohar region in Punjab Province, because the environment these regions are quite suitable for Olive cultivation, while export of Olive oil can bring millions of foreign exchanges for Pakistan.

India seizes cargo...

FROM PAGE 01
that the commercial consignment imported from China was seized by the Indian authorities at the Mumbai port due to the incompetence of the shipping company. The petitioner said that the Indian authorities seized the consignment, alleging its use in nuclear and missile programmes. The Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a clarification, stating that the consignment was purely for commercial use, he said.

Briefs

Muslim heritage Month celebrated in New Jersey

NEW YORK: The Assembly of US state of New Jersey marked Muslim Heritage Month with a ceremony at the Statehouse in Trenton, recognizing the contributions of Muslim-Americans to the states cultural and social fabric. The event brought together lawmakers and community members to highlight the role of Muslim communities in fostering diversity, education, and interfaith engagement. New Jersey is home to around 320,000 Muslims, which is about 3.5% of the state's population. As part of the event, Assemblywoman Shama Haider honored two young Pakistani-American leaders, Hannan Arshad and Rizwan Ali, for their commitment to civic engagement and interfaith dialogue. Before migrating to the United States, Ms. Haider served as secretary to former Pakistani First Lady, Begum Nurat Bhutto. Hannan Arshad, a Rutgers University graduate currently pursuing a Masters in Healthcare Administration at New York University and working at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, was recognized for his involvement in interfaith initiatives and community service. He has been an active participant in the New Jersey Pakistan Day Parade and local political efforts. —APP

Islamophobic politician Paludan repeats Qur'an desecration

DENMARK: Swedish-Danish Islamophobic politician Rasmus Paludan has once again desecrated the Holy Qur'an by burning a copy of Islam's most revered book in the Danish capital city of Copenhagen. Paludan, the 43-year-old founder and leader of the Danish nationalist anti-immigration party Stram Kurs, has once again sparked controversy by committing the sacrilegious act outside the Turkish embassy in Denmark. A video published on a social media platform shows Paludan desecrating the Holy Qur'an, a deeply offensive act to Muslims worldwide. On Friday, the Danish police announced that Paludan, based on a "concrete assessment," is prohibited from demonstrating in Copenhagen for the next 24 hours. Paludan's recent desecration of the Holy Qur'an came after the murder of Iraqi immigrant Salwan Momiqa at his apartment in the city of Sodertalje on January 30. Momiqa's repeated desecration of the copies of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden also outraged Muslims and non-Muslims across the world. —APP

At least 56 killed as fighting grips greater Khartoum

PORT SUDAN: Artillery shelling and air strikes killed at least 56 people across greater Khartoum on Saturday, according to a medical source and Sudanese activists. Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been locked in a battle for power since April 2023 that has intensified this month as the army fights to take all of the capital Khartoum and its sister cities of Omdurman and Khartoum North. RSF shelling killed 54 people at a busy market in Omdurman on Saturday, overwhelming the city's Al-Nao Hospital, a medical source told AFP. "The shells hit in the middle of the vegetable market, that's why the victims and the wounded are so many," one survivor told AFP. Across the Nile in Khartoum, two civilians were killed and dozens wounded in an air strike on an RSF-controlled area, the local Emergency Response Room (ERR) said. Although the RSF has used drones in attacks including on Saturday, the fighter jets of the regular armed forces maintain a monopoly on air strikes. —APP

Jordan eyes increased exports to Iraq amid boosting eco ties

Official data shows Jordan's exports to Iraq reached 830 million dinars (\$1.17 billion) in the first 11 months of last year, a 45.6 percent increase over the same period in 2023. Iraq also accounted for 25.4 percent of Jordan's total exports to the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, valued at 3.25 billion dinars

BAGHDAD: A Jordanian delegation arrived in Baghdad on Saturday to bolster economic cooperation and explore new opportunities in the Iraqi market, with a focus on expanding Jordanian exports, the Jordan News Agency reported. The visit, organized by the Jordan Chamber of Industry in partnership with Jordan Export House, coincided with the Baghdad International Fair, where Jordanian industrial firms are set to showcase their products in a dedicated pavilion. The delegation will also participate in a Jordanian-Iraqi business forum, facilitating discussions between key industrial and commercial figures from both nations. JCI Chairman Fathi Jaghbir said the initiative aimed to restore Jordanian exports to Iraq to previous levels, when the Iraqi market accounted for roughly 20 percent of Jordan's total exports. He described Iraq as a "strategic depth" for Jordanian industries, and highlighted the chamber's commitment to increasing trade between the two countries. The forum will be attended by Jordan's Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply, Yarub Qudah, alongside Iraq's Minister of Industry and Minerals, Khaled Batai, and will feature a dialogue session on Jordan-Iraq trade, titled "Visions



and a Bright Future," to highlight the growing collaboration between the public and private sectors. Jaghbir said that ongoing efforts between Jordanian and Iraqi business leaders have begun to show "tangible" results, with Jordanian exports to Iraq rising by 45 percent over the past

year. He also pointed to past initiatives, such as a specialized Jordanian industries exhibition in Baghdad and multiple bilateral forums, which have led to new agreements and the establishment of joint business chambers. Ihab Qadiri, head

of the JCI's Iraq focus, underscored the country's strategic importance for Jordanian exports, noting that 70 Jordanian companies are taking part in the business forum. Official data shows Jordan's exports to Iraq reached 830 million di-

nars (\$1.17 billion) in the first 11 months of last year, a 45.6 percent increase over the same period in 2023. Iraq also accounted for 25.4 percent of Jordan's total exports to the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, valued at 3.25 billion dinars. —Agencies

US-Pak businesses discuss enhancing economic ties

The discussion evoked interest among participants, who inquired about infrastructure, incentives, and taxation policies, the press release said. It said follow-up meetings would be organized to facilitate further engagement and sector-specific discussions, paving the way for stronger economic ties between Pakistan and businesses in New Jersey

NEW YORK: A senior Pakistani diplomat discussed strengthening of economic cooperation between Pakistan and the US state of New Jersey when he met local elected officials and representatives of businesses, according to a consulate press release. The discussion took place when Pakistan's Consul General in New York, Aamer Ahmed Atozai, visited New Jersey to explore avenues for boosting bilateral trade ties, as well as investment opportunities. He was accompanied by the Trade & Investment Counsellor at the Consulate, Adnan Mahmood Awan. During the visit, they met with New Jersey Assemblywoman Shama Haider, who is of Pakistani origin, and engaged with local businessmen. Consul General Atozai provided an overview of Pakistan's trade relations with the U.S., emphasizing the untapped potential for collaboration across various sectors. He highlighted key industries where Pakistan and New Jersey-based businesses could mutually benefit from increased engagement. Trade & Investment Counsellor Awan gave a detailed presentation on investment opportunities in Pakistan, focusing on high-growth sectors such as IT, agriculture, mining, and tourism. He outlined Pakistan's investor-friendly policies, its strategic geographical location as a gateway to South and Central Asia, and its preferential trade agreements, including GSP+ status with the European Union and a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China. Awan also underscored the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in streamlining investment processes to create a more business-friendly environment. The discussion evoked interest among participants, who inquired about infrastructure, incentives, and taxation policies, the press release said. It said follow-up meetings would be organized to facilitate further engagement and sector-specific discussions, paving the way for stronger economic ties between Pakistan and businesses in New Jersey. —APP

From kitchens to corporations
Pakistan's women entrepreneurs creating new narratives

ISLAMABAD: In Pakistan, the role of women is rapidly evolving. Traditionally, women were expected to manage homes and raise children, but today, they are making significant contributions across all sectors, business, healthcare, education, technology, and more. Women in Pakistan are excelling in fields once dominated by men, challenging stereotypes and redefining their roles in society. Historically, women were primarily seen in professions like teaching or nursing. Today, they are forging paths in engineering, IT, and robotics. Many have become successful pilots, doctors, lawyers, and leaders in creative industries like filmmaking, writing, and fashion design. Pakistani women are also breaking new ground in sports, with notable achievements in cricket, football, and athletics on international platforms. This shift is driven by a changing societal attitude. As families grow more supportive and access to education improves, more women are entering a variety of professions. Today, many women are running businesses, working in startups, and holding leadership roles across industries, contributing to a more progressive and inclusive future for the nation. Quaid-e-Azam, Pakistan's founder, emphasized that a nation cannot prosper without women playing an equal role in society. His vision from 1947 laid the foundation for women's empowerment, but much remains to be done to bring that vision to life. While progress is being made, societal restrictions and gender discrimination still limit women's full potential in Pakistan. Although the global trend of women entrepreneurship is on the rise, the situation in Pakistan remains concerning. Women make up just 23-25% of the labor force, with only 1% being entrepreneurs. Despite the increasing number of women earning university degrees, only 25% enter the workforce, reflecting a vast underutilization of talent. Pakistani cuisine recipes. —APP

Ease of doing business must for growth as Pakistan ranking still down: BMP

Pak position fluctuates on WB Ease of Doing Business ranking: Anjum

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that not the extensive borrowing but improving the Ease of Doing Business Index of the country was vital to put the country's economy back on track. BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that according to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report, Pakistan's ranking has fluctuated, reflecting persistent obstacles such as bureaucratic red tape, complex tax regulations, and insufficient infrastructure. In the Doing Business report, Pakistan ranked 108th out of 190 economies, showing some improvement from previous years but still indicating significant room for enhancement. Previously the country was even worse off, standing at 136 in 2019. In previous tenure, a high level steering committee was formed to oversee the progress of reforms on each of the 10 indicators measured under the ease of doing business report. This resulted in significant improvement in Pakistan's rankings however the new government has come up with a new, more ambitious goal. The FPCCI former president said that with continuous hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management, asking the authorities for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment for better Ease of Doing Business level to boost foreign investment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run. He alleged all previous governments for extensive borrowing of forex during last five years to meet local expenditure, which had increased the burden of foreign debt of Pakistan substantially, instead of making serious efforts to enhance the ranking of Ease of Doing Business Index of Pakistan, as it is must to attract foreign as well as local investment and high economic growth. He stressed the need for reducing cost of doing business, besides evolving a new price control mechanism, as huge taxation, rising oil prices and constant jump in electricity and gas tariffs have lifted the inflation to decades high level in 2024. The BMP chief warned the authorities that inflation can hurt economic growth and a careful policy is required to keep it in control. He said that the pace of inflation is skyrocketing at a time when the economic activity is slowing down. As the oil prices have been increased and power tariff has gone up further, the chairman stated that the government has dropped a fuel bomb on the businessmen after it suffered an electric shock to meet the conditions of IMF for the revival of the stalled loan program-a recipe to shake the trade and industry. He said that the decision would prove detrimental to the industries due to high cost of doing business and will also open the floodgates of inflation. In addition to making the electricity bills costlier and unaffordable for the consumers, the hike in base tariff would escalate prices of all household goods being widely used in every household, he added. Anjum Nisar termed the increase in tariff unlawful and a violation of NEPRA's own rules and regulations, as any increase in tariff has to be determined and implemented only after holding public hearings but unfortunately they have solely decided to raise the tariff without holding public hearings, he argued. He condemned the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's decision to increase electricity tariffs, stating that the burden of power theft, mismanagement, and inefficiencies cannot be shifted to consumers on the pretext of fuel adjustment. He said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector. —DNA

Iran has progressed in every aspect over past 40 years

TEHRAN: Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has praised Iran's progress in various domains, saying the country has grown in all directions over the past 40 years. "The Iranian nation has shown patience and perseverance for over 40 years, while all the arrogant world powers stood against it, working and plotting against it," the Leader said in a meeting on Sunday with dozens of Quran reciters and memorizers attending the 41st International Holy Quran Competitions in the Iranian capital, Tehran. "Yet, not only has the Iranian nation not been harmed, but it has also advanced and grown. Today's Iran is not the Iran of 40 years ago—we have progressed in every aspect," he added. The Leader stressed that the Islamic Republic is confronting global arrogance alongside other countries in the world. However, he



went on, "What distinguishes Iran from many other nations is the Iranian people's courage to denounce the United States as an aggressor, a liar, a deceitful and arrogant power while proclaiming down with America." Ayatollah Khamenei also extolled the sacrifices of Palestinian resistance groups against the Israeli regime and underscored the imminent victory of people in the besieged Gaza Strip against the occupying entity. "God willing, Gaza will prevail over the Zionist regime," he asserted. Ayatollah Khamenei underlined the victory of the people of Gaza over the Zionist regime and the American regime as an example of the realization of what seemed impossible. "If it had been said that the people of the small region of Gaza would fight against a great power like the US and emerge victorious, no one would have believed it, but this impossible matter has been realized by God's permission," he noted. —DNA

Seminar on export financing strategies

QUETTA: The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), hosted a seminar titled "Unlocking Export Growth: Navigating Export Financing Strategies" at the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI). The event highlighted SBP's export financing schemes, including the Export Financing Scheme (EFS) and Long-Term Financing Facility (LTF), with TDAP providing critical insights into accessing these opportunities and enhancing value addition to boost exports, said a news release received here on Sunday. Director TDAP, Mola Dad reiterated TDAP's commitment to supporting entrepreneurs by organizing awareness sessions across districts and guiding them through export procedures. Zain ul Abideen, GSP Officer TDAP, emphasized the seminar as part of a broader series to empower local businesses. Vice President QCCI, Agha Gul Khilji urged for tailored financial schemes for Balochistan, while SBP's Aungzeb Kakar and Taraque Foundation's Habtar Ali encouraged stakeholders to collaborate and address systemic challenges. The seminar concluded with recommendations for forming a committee to suggest loan policy revisions to SBP and expanding awareness programs. TDAP pledged to enhance its efforts to showcase Balochistan's resources on international platforms, reflecting its pivotal role in unlocking the province's export potential and driving economic growth. —APP

10th Int'l Military Quran Memorization Competition kicks off in Makkah

MAKKAH: The 10th International Military Quran Memorization Competition has commenced in Makkah, bringing together 179 participants from 32 countries the other day. The competition, organized by the General Administration of Religious Affairs of the Armed Forces under the patronage of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, aims to promote the significance of the Quran, encourage its memorization, and underscore Saudi Arabia's role as the custodian of Islam's holiest sites. The event features six categories: full Quran memorization, as well as 20-part, 10-part, five-part, and three-part memorization, along with a special category dedicated to recitation and Tajweed (proper pronunciation). Alongside the competition, a Quranic forum for religious affairs directors and Imams is being held, highlighting Saudi Arabia's contributions to Quran printing, translation, and distribution. Discussions at the forum focus on the moral values derived from the Quran, the Kingdom's religious initiatives, and the significance of Tajweed in deepening understanding of the holy book. The General Administration of Religious Affairs is also conducting specialized training programs for religious affairs personnel within the armed forces, with a focus on Quranic teaching methodologies and skill enhancement for instructors and competition judges. Maj. Gen. Mesfer Al-Issa, director of the General Administration of Religious Affairs and competition supervisor, described the event as a major initiative to honor the Quran. He emphasized Saudi Arabia's commitment to fostering Quranic learning among military personnel, reinforcing the leadership's dedication to religious education. Al-Issa underscored the profound impact of the competition, particularly given its setting in the sacred cities of Makkah and Madinah. He noted that the Quran plays a vital role in shaping the character of soldiers, instilling psychological, behavioral, and spiritual stability. The 14-day event will be held over two phases: the first 10 days in Makkah, followed by four days in Madinah, where participants will visit the Prophet's Mosque and other significant Islamic landmarks. —APP

Briefs

Interior minister meets NA speaker

DNA

LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq met in Islamabad on Sunday, with the PTI's "attitude" during the recent talks with the government coming under discussion. After more than a year of heightened tensions between the government and the PTI, the two sides commenced dialogue in the last week of December to bring down political temperatures. But despite weeks of negotiations, the dialogue process stalled on major issues – the formation of two judicial commissions and the release of PTI prisoners. The PTI boycotted the fourth meeting this week, calling off talks over a delay in the government forming judicial commissions to probe the protests of May 9, 2023 and Nov 26, 2024. While the government renewed the invitation to the PTI to rejoin the negotiation process by proposing a parliamentary committee, the latter rejected the offer. Naqvi met with the NA speaker today, where both discussed matters of mutual interest and the overall situation in the country, a statement by the interior ministry said. It added that the "PTI's attitude, despite the positive progress made by the government for negotiations," was also discussed during the meeting.

PPP equally responsible for PECA, says Saif

Barrister Saif said the PPP voted in favour of the PECA

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Adviser on Information, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, stated that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is equally responsible for the amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). In his statement, Barrister Saif said the PPP voted in favour of the PECA, which officially became law after being signed by President Asif Zardari. He criticised the PPP for opposing the act in the media, calling it hypocrisy. "The PML-N and the PPP are two sides of the same coin, equally accountable for enforcing oppressive laws in the country," Saif added. The PTI leader stated that both parties have contributed to promoting lawlessness in the country and will have to account for their illicit wealth.

Missing Karachi trader found dead

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A Karachi trader who went missing on January 29, found dead from Do Darya area of the city on Sunday. The body of Asif Kamal, a trader of Star Mobile Market in Karachi's Saddar, was found brutally murdered in Do Darya, the police reported. Asif, had gone missing on January 29 after leaving his residence in Landhi for work. A missing person's report was filed by his family after an extensive search, and a case of alleged kidnapping was registered at the Landhi police station on February 1. The police are currently investigating the circumstances surrounding Asif's disappearance and murder. Separately, at least 12 children have gone missing or allegedly kidnapped in Karachi since December 2024, with some being recovered and others still missing. According to a report obtained by ARY News from the Karachi police, three children went missing from the West Zone including Sarim, a minor from North Karachi who was allegedly kidnapped and murdered. However, a child who went missing from Gulbahar was recovered.

'No winner in trade war'

China, Canada and Mexico come down hard on US tariffs

Beijing to challenge President Donald Trump's tariff at World Trade Organisation, say Chinese ministries



NEWS DESK

Beijing/Ottawa/Mexico City: China's government on Sunday denounced the Trump administration's imposition of a long-threatened 10% tariff on Chinese imports while leaving the door open for talks with the US that could avoid a deepening conflict. Beijing will challenge President Donald Trump's tariff at the World Trade Organisation and take unspecified "countermeasures" in response to the levy, which takes effect on Tuesday, the finance and commerce ministries said. The response stopped short of the immediate escalation that had marked China's trade showdown with Trump in his first term as president and repeated the more measured language Beijing has used in recent weeks. Trump on Saturday ordered 25% tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports and 10% on goods from China, saying Beijing needed to stanch the flow of fentanyl, a deadly opioid, into the United States. China's commerce ministry said in a statement that Trump's move "serious-



ly violates" international trade rules, urging the US to "engage in frank dialogue and strengthen cooperation". Filing a lawsuit with the WTO would be a largely symbolic move that Beijing has also taken against tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles by the European Union. For weeks Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning has said Beijing believes there is no winner in a trade war. China's sharpest pushback on Sunday was over fentanyl, an area where the administration of Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, had also been urging Beijing to crack down on shipments of the China-made precursor chemicals needed to manufacture the drug. "Fentanyl is America's problem," China's foreign ministry said. "The Chinese side has carried out extensive anti-narcotics cooperation with the United States and achieved remarkable results." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada would respond with 25% tariffs against \$155 billion of US goods, including beer, wine, lumber and appliances, beginning with \$30 billion taking effect Tuesday and \$125 billion

21 days later. Trudeau warned US citizens that Trump's tariffs would raise their grocery and gasoline costs, potentially shutting down auto assembly plants and limiting supplies of goods such as nickel, potash, uranium, steel and aluminum. He urged his own citizens to forego travel to the US and to boycott US products. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, in a post on X, said she was instructing her economy minister to implement retaliatory tariffs but gave no details. Canada and Mexico said they were working together to face Trump's tariffs. China's Commerce Ministry did not specify its planned countermeasures. Its statement left open the door for talks between Washington and Beijing. "China hopes that the US will view and handle its own fentanyl and other issues in an objective and rational manner," it said, adding that Beijing wanted to "engage in frank dialogue, strengthen cooperation and manage differences." A White House fact sheet said the tariffs would stay in place "until the crisis alleviated," but gave no details on what the three countries would need to do to win a reprieve. At nearly \$100 billion in 2023, imports of crude oil accounted for roughly a quarter of all US imports from Canada, according to US Census Bureau data. Automakers would be particularly hard hit, with new steep tariffs on vehicles built in Canada and Mexico burdening a vast regional supply chain where parts can cross borders several times before final assembly. The tariff announcement makes good Trump's repeated threat during the 2024 presidential campaign and since taking office, defying warnings from top economists that a new trade war with the US trade partners would erode US and global growth, while raising prices for consumers and companies. Republicans welcomed the news, while industry groups and Democrats issued stark warnings about the impact on prices. National Foreign Trade Council President Jake Colvin said Trump's move threatened to raise the costs of "everything from avocados to automobiles" and urged the US, Canada and Mexico to find a quick solution to avoid escalation. The three countries should work together to "gain a competitive advantage and facilitate American companies' ability to export to global markets," Colvin said in a statement.

Thousands flee homes as floods hit Australia

CANBERRA: A woman has died in Australia and thousands have been forced to flee their homes after torrential rainfall has caused flooding in northern Queensland. Authorities are warning that flood waters could rise up to second-storey level in a situation they described as dangerous and life-threatening.

More than 700mm (26in) of rain has fallen on parts of the North Queensland in the past 24 hours and there is concern that "record rainfalls" will continue into Monday, according to Queensland State Premier David Crisafulli.

Meteorologists say these could be the worst floods in the region in more than 60 years. Crisafulli said conditions were unlike anything northern Queensland had experienced "for a long time". "It's not just the intensity, but it's also the longevity of it," he told Australian broadcaster ABC.

Thousands of people living in the city of Townsville were told to leave their homes by midday on Sunday while authorities brought in 100,000 sandbags to block floodwater. Parts of the road between Townsville and the tourist centre of Cairns have been cut off, hampering efforts to get rescue teams and sandbags to the area. - Agencies

Pak aims to convert 30% of vehicles to electric

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a major step towards sustainable transportation, Pakistan plans to shift at least 30% of its vehicles to electric power by 2030. The initiative, backed by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), aims to promote the electric vehicle (EV) industry by implementing new rules and regulations for EV charging stations and manufacturing. According to sources, the government is actively working on infrastructure development, including the production of electric vehicles and motorcycles, as well as establishing a network of charging stations across the country. To encourage the transition, PS has announced a 44% reduction in electricity rates for EV charging stations.

Turkish FM rejects Trump's plan to relocate Gazans

Qatar's PM and FM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani called for the full implementation of the Gaza ceasefire agreement

DOHA: Speaking at a news conference with his Qatari counterpart in Doha on Sunday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said they strictly opposed the relocation of Palestinians from Gaza as proposed by the Trump administration and said it was an inhumane approach. Fidan arrived in the Gulf country, which is a key partner of Ankara in the region, for a two-day visit that began with his meeting with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. His visit came one day after Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League released a joint statement rejecting any plans to move Palestinians out of Gaza and the occupied West Bank. Days after his inauguration, U.S. President Donald Trump floated the idea of relocation, saying he would urge the leaders of Jordan and Egypt to take in Gaza's largely homeless population "to clean out" the city following the start of a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas. He said the majority of 2.3 million people in Gaza could be tempo-

rarily resettled or for a longer term, echoing similar plans floated by some Israeli officials after the beginning of a new round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2023. The Arab statement warned that such plans "threaten the region's stability, risk expanding the conflict and undermine prospects for peace and coexistence among its peoples." Fidan said Türkiye backed the joint statement. "We firmly oppose projects for driving people of Palestine out of Gaza, their displacement, their resettlement in another country. This is a proposal running against the laws of humanity. Everyone should stand against it," Fidan said in his news conference with Al Thani. The Turkish foreign minister also spoke about the possibility of his country's admission of Palestinians freed by Israel. He said they could take in some prisoners. "Our president has declared that we are ready to take in some freed Palestinians... to support the agreement. Türkiye, along with other countries, will do its part in this regard so the cease-fire agreement can remain in force," he said. - Agencies

ANF busts int'l drug gang, frees innocent family: Naqvi

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Nine members of an international drug gang, who framed an innocent family by swapping their bag tags at the airport, have been arrested by ANF. Moreover, on the directions of Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi, tireless efforts of the Anti-Narcotics



Force (ANF) team led to the release and return of 5 members of the innocent family, who were detained in Saudi Arabia. Interior and Narcotics Control Minister visited the residence of the family and met with them. He was accompanied by DG Anti-Narcotics Force Major General Abdul Mueed. Interior Minister expressed heartfelt sympathy with the affected family and congratulated them on their release and return home. Mohsin Naqvi said that the pain the family endured is indescribable. The ANF worked day and night to track down the international gang and arrest the real culprits. He also praised the Saudi Government for their cooperation, saying, "I extend special thanks to the Saudi Government." Mohsin Naqvi commended the efforts of DG ANF and entire team in securing the release of the innocent family, adding that special awards will be given to the team. He highlighted that the ANF team worked extremely hard to resolve the case, and their efforts are praiseworthy. The uncle of the affected family, Malik Arshad, thanked Mohsin Naqvi and the ANF team for their efforts. Haroon Ali, a member of the affected family, said that Mohsin Naqvi and DG ANF Major General Abdul Mueed did something that cannot be expressed in words.

Russian attacks on Ukraine kill 14

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of being "devoid of civility", sharing a video on social media showing a heavily damaged building

FOREIGN DESK

POLTAVA: Russia fired dozens of missiles and drones at Ukraine overnight and early Saturday, killing 14 people, Kyiv said. Ukraine also accused Moscow earlier of striking a boarding school sheltering civilians in the Ukrainian-occupied town of Sudzha in Moscow's Kursk region, where Kyiv launched a major cross-border assault last August. The Ukrainian army said four people had died in the attack, with dozens more rescued as rescuers cleared the rubble. Fighting in the nearly three-year war has shown no signs of de-escalating, despite US President Donald Trump's promise to enact a ceasefire within "24 hours" of taking office on January 20. At least 14 people were killed in Russian strikes in central and eastern Ukraine overnight and early Saturday, according to regional authorities and police. Ten of those, including a child, were killed by a missile that hit a residential building in the central city of Poltava, the local administration said. Firefighters could be seen searching through the smouldering ruins of a building in AFP images from the scene. "God saved us," said Olena Svyryd, a resident of a neighbouring building. "Opposite us, on the fifth floor, a woman, my friend, was taken out. No, she's not alive. She was crushed by the wall. There were a lot of casualties," she told AFP. Kateryna Yamschychkova, acting mayor of Poltava, said rescue operations were still ongoing. "Doctors in the

hospital are fighting for our wounded," she told AFP. Ukraine accused Russia on Saturday of killing four people in a strike on a boarding school sheltering civilians in the Kursk region town of Sudzha, which Kyiv has occupied for over five months. Kyiv launched a surprise cross-border offensive into the Kursk region last August, seizing dozens of villages and small towns including the regional hub of Sudzha – home to about 6,000 people before the fighting. "Russian aviation struck a boarding school in the town of Sudzha, Kursk region, with a guided aerial bomb," the Ukrainian army's general staff said on Telegram. "The strike was carried out on purpose," it added. It said "dozens of local residents were inside the building preparing to evacuate" at the time of the attack, and that rescue work was under way. "In the course of the rubble removal works, 84 civilians were rescued and provided with medical aid, their health condition is satisfactory, four are in serious condition, and four people died," it said in a later post. President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of being "devoid of civility", sharing a video on social media showing a heavily damaged building, as well as an injured man lying on the ground. They destroyed the building even though dozens of civilians were there," Zelensky said in a post on X. "Russian bombs destroy Ukrainian homes the same way. And even against their own civilians, the Russian army uses similar tactics." AFP was not able to immediately verify Ukraine's claim, and Russian officials made no immediate public comments on the accusations.

Saad Rafique calls for amendments to PECA law

In a statement on social media, he urged that media representative organisations be consulted regarding PECA

DNA

LAHORE: Former federal minister Khawaja Saad Rafique on Sunday emphasised the need for amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) law to ensure that citizens' rights are not compromised in the battle against fake news. In a statement on social media, Saad Rafique urged that media representative organisations be consulted regarding PECA. He stressed the need for amendments to the law to safeguard fundamental rights. He also called for granting high courts the authority to hear appeals against the decisions of tribunals formed under PECA. "History shows that laws designed to control others often end up being used against their creators," he warned. Meanwhile, the journalists' organizations have announced marching towards Parliament House and stage sit-in in the next phase of protests. In a statement, Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) Secretary General Arshad Ansari unveiled the plan for organising nationwide rallies and protests under the joint action committee. He also revealed that the media fraternity aimed to stage a long march to the Parliament House, sit-ins and "Jail Bharo Tehreek [court arrest movement] against the Peca tweaks".

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