



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, February 04, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Pakistan target of planned conspiracy

Detailed News On Page-08



Urges 'change of policy'

Imran criticises 'establishment's policies' in letter

Former prime minister writes six-point letter, also mentioning Al-Qadir Trust case

STAFF REPORT / DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has written a letter to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, urging him to change policies, his lawyer Faisal Chaudhry said on Monday. Speaking to the media outside Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, where Khan is imprisoned, Chaudhry said: "Imran Khan, as a former prime minister and a party supremo, has written a six-point letter to the army chief." The ousted premier, who was removed from power via a parliamentary vote in 2022, has expressed solidarity with the military in its fight against terrorism, acknowledging the sacrifices made by soldiers, Chaudhry said. Khan, as per the lawyer, emphasised the need for the entire nation to stand with the armed forces. According to Chaudhry, the letter's first point addresses "fraudulent elections" and the alleged promotion of money launderers. The second point discusses the impact of the 26th Constitutional Amendment on judicial independence and the rule of law. Khan also referenced the Al-Qadir Trust case verdict in the letter. The third point criticises the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), stating that it has been weaponised to suppress dissent and crack down on social media. The fourth point highlights cases of terrorism charges, raids, and the use of force against PTI workers. Khan also wrote that threats to journalists are damaging the army's reputation. The fifth point concerns intelligence agencies' operations, while the final point focuses on the economy. Khan claimed the incumbent government has weakened the economy by artificially controlling the rupee's value. He also raised concerns over low investment and internet shut-downs. Chaudhry added that Khan urged the army chief to

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Constitution holds no value in the eyes of powerful: Fazl

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: JUI Chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman has said that PECA Amendments Act 2025 has choked the freedom of expression in Pakistan, adding that for the powerful class the constitution has no value it can be amended as per their wishes. Talking to media outside parliament house in Islamabad, Fazl said that PECA law was passed unilaterally as journalist community was not consulted. He said President Zardari had assured JUI that Mohsin Naqvi will talk to media and redress their concerns but later perhaps Zardari received such pressure that the President signed at once. JUI Chief said earlier 26th Constitutional Amendment was neutralized because of JUI pressure. Fazl said there was not writ of the government in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and concerned department have failed to restore peace there. He said JUI feels sorry when hears about the martyrdom of Army men. JUI Chief said earlier JUI had strong believe that the boundaries of the country were safe and secure but it was quite otherwise. He said he had made compromise on Jammu Kashmir because of global pressure. He was of the view that now the government was trying to strain relations with Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses signing of Oil Import Financing Facility/Loan Agreement for Gravity Flow Water Scheme, Mansehra. - DNA

Swedish court finds Quran burner guilty of hate crimes

Salwan Najem imposed fines over holy book desecration, derogatory comments he made about Muslims

AGENCIES

STOCKHOLM: A Swedish court found an anti-Islam campaigner guilty on Monday of hate crimes for publicly desecrating Holy Quran, in a ruling handed down five days after another man also being prosecuted over the incidents was shot dead. Salwan Najem, a Swedish citizen, was given a suspended sentence and fines over the holy book desecration and derogatory comments he made about Muslims in the 2023 incidents, which led to unrest and inspired anger towards Sweden in Muslim countries.

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To boost economic coop

Pak to receive Saudi oil worth \$1.2 bn on deferred payment

Pakistan, SDF ink agreement for construction of gravity-flow water scheme at Mansehra

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Monday signed two agreements worth US\$1.61 billion to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation further. The signing ceremony between Pakistan and the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) was witnessed Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif and Sultan Abdulrahman Al-Marshad, the SFD's CEO. According to state-run news agency APP, the agreements included a concessional credit deal for the building of a gravity-flow water scheme at Mansehra totaling \$41 million and a one-year deferred payment for oil imports to Pakistan by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia worth \$1.20 billion. Secretary Economic Affairs Division Dr. Kazim Niaz and CEO SDF Sultan Bin Abdul Rehman Al Marshad signed the agreements on behalf of their respective governments.

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PM Shehbaz calls for national cohesion to confront terrorism

Premier visits CMH Quetta, inquires about health of security personnel injured while fighting terrorists

DNA

QUETTA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday emphasised the need for national cohesion in order to confront terrorism and ensure the prosperity and stability of the country. "There is no room for political division or politics on national issues," the premier said while addressing a meeting held on the law and order situation in Balochistan during his special visit to Quetta.

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Briefs

PECA to curb fake news, says Atta Tarar

Tarar said that PECA will ensure the freedom of speech

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said that the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) will ensure the freedom of speech. Addressing a ceremony in Lahore, the information minister said that PECA is meant to discourage the fake news. "There is no check or editorial control on digital media. The PECA has been introduced after thorough deliberations," Tarar said. He added that the notables from private sector would be included in the Digital Media Protection Authority. He said the purpose of PECA is to provide protection to journalists and eliminate incidents of harassment.

vows to address judges' concerns

Judges' transfer to IHC constitutional: CJP Afridi

Top judge says Islamabad represents federation, welcomes justices from other provinces

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi has termed the transfer of judges as a constitutional and positive step, emphasising that more judges from other provinces should also be inducted. Speaking at the oath-taking ceremony of the Press Association in Islamabad, Justice Afridi addressed concerns over the transfer of Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges, saying that Islamabad represents the Centre. He said, "We are sent to school to become gentlemen," adding that he had no objections to the transfers as they were conducted under constitutional provisions. Referring to Article 200, he pointed out that a Balochi-speaking and Sindhi-speaking judge had joined the IHC, reinforcing national integration. He further said that the federation belongs to the entire country, and the inclusion of judges from different provinces was a welcome move. When asked about judges' reservations regarding the transfers, the chief justice assured that he was actively

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'Civilians cannot be court-martialed under any circumstances'

If civilians could be court-martialed, the 21st amendment would not have been necessary

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Advocate Khawaja Ahmed Hussain, the counsel for appellant retired Justice Jawad S. Khawaja, said on Monday that civilians cannot be court-martialed under any circumstances and the procedure of military courts is contrary to the provisions of a fair trial. Advocate Hussain was arguing before a seven-member bench of the constitutional court of Supreme Court during the hearing of intra-court

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President Zardari to visit China today

President Zardari is set to hold high-level meetings with President Xi, Premier Li Qiang, and other senior officials

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari will embark on a state visit to China today at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, underscoring the two countries' longstanding strategic ties. During his stay in Beijing, President Zardari is set to hold high-level meetings with President Xi, Premier Li Qiang, and other senior Chinese officials. The discussions will

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Iranian embassy condemns terror attacks in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan has extended condolences to government and people of Pakistan and the families who lost loved ones during the attacks of the terrorist elements against security forces in recent days. Recalling the principled position of IR. Iran in condemning all forms of terrorism & extremism, it emphasizes the necessity of continuous efforts as well as bilateral, regional & international cooperation to prevent and effectively combat this ominous phenomenon.

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to reduce bitterness between the PPP and PML-N - key ruling coalition partners - the former urged the latter to ensure implementation on the power-sharing formula agreed between the two sides in February, 2024, revealed well-placed sources on Monday. The development came during a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PPP leaders, including Syed Khurshid Shah, Shazia Marri and Aijaz Jakhri at National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's residence in Lahore on Sunday. The purpose of the visit was to congratulate Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah, who belongs to PPP, on his son's wedding. During their interaction with PM Shehbaz, PPP leaders Shah and Jakhri stressed the need for implementation on the power-sharing formula while Marri raised the issues of Sindh's water share and the federal government's plan to construct six canals on the Indus River. After the general elections on February 8 last year, PPP and PML-N - former arch-rivals - reached a formal agreement to form a coalition government as

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Son of Afghan leader among terrorists killed in KP: Report

"Among those killed was the son of the deputy governor of Baghdeis province of Afghanistan. He was identified as Badaruddin alias Yousaf," it claimed

STAFF REPORT

THE son of the deputy governor of Afghanistan's Badghis province was among four terrorists killed during a counterterrorism operation last week in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, state-run Radio reported on Monday. Islamabad has consistently voiced concerns that the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) uses Afghan soil to launch attacks in Pakistan, asking the Afghanistan government to rein in the group. Kabul denies the allegations. Radio Pakistan, citing sources,

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NAHE concludes capacity building programme

ISLAMABAD: National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), Higher Education Commission (HEC) successfully concluded its one-week Capacity Building Training Programme for University Management at the Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU), Rawalpindi. This programme, designed to be a transformative initiative, aimed to equip administrative staff with the skills to serve their institutes, enabling them to enhance their roles as professional management personals. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Umar, Vice Chancellor RMU welcomed NAHE team including Sulaiman Ahmad, Raja Asif Hussain, and Tahir Mehmood and participants. He applauded NAHE for their dedication and efforts, which were instrumental in the programme's success. The chief guest, Sulaiman Ahmad, Director of NAHE, HEC, informed that NAHE is providing training to equip HEIs management with multiple managerial and leadership skills to handle complex problems and challenges relevant to their job assignments effectively through rigorous trainings. Focusing on developing a significant change in their interpersonal, communication, leadership, financial management decision-making, team building skills and procurement, enabling them to lead and manage their institutional responsibilities in a more effective manner. By improving the capabilities and effectiveness of university management, institutions can better contribute to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Professional development aligns with and supports the following SDGs in letter and spirit, 1)SDG4-Quality Education, SDG5-Gender Equality, SDG8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG10-Reduced Inequalities, SDG13-Climate Action and SDG16-Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.—APP

DC Gujranwala launches anti-encroachment drive

GUJRANWALA: Deputy Commissioner Naveed Ahmed has reaffirmed the administration's commitment to eliminating encroachments in Wazirabad, stressing that the operation is being carried out to benefit citizens and traders alike. During his visit to Wazirabad on Monday, Ahmed inspected key areas, including the District Headquarters Hospital, Circular Road, and Bartan Bazaar. He was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Rab Nawaz Chadhar, President Central Organization of Traders Nasir Mahmudullah Wale, and other prominent figures. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that the anti-encroachment drive aims to facilitate trade and commerce, making it easier for people to shop and conduct business without facing difficulties. He noted that the removal of encroachments has already improved access to markets, enabling women to shop for essential goods without hassle. Moreover, Ahmed highlighted that the elimination of encroachments will boost business for the trading community and shopkeepers, ultimately contributing to the region's economic growth.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: SSP Operation Muhammad Shoaib Khan interacting with media persons at the office of the Rescue 15 after seizing a large number of Kites and threads during Anti Kites campaign in Federal Capital.

Aurangzeb reveals 2.41% inflation rate at ICCI meeting

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has called upon the private sector to take an active role in Pakistan's economic turnaround, while the government is committed to providing a supportive framework. He expressed optimism about the country's economic direction, citing increased investments and solid performance of existing investments. He said that country's economy has stabilized during last 12 months, policy rate has come down, local and foreign investments have increased and most importantly the inflation rate has come down

to 2.41 percent and that the government will make sure that its benefit should go to the masses. Aurangzeb emphasized the government's role in providing a stable policy framework and continuity, which he believes is crucial for attracting further investment. Speaking at the pre-budget discussion session with the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leadership, Aurangzeb said that to achieve economic stability, the government has initiated the budget-making process for the fiscal year 2025-26, seeking to align the national budget with its economic vision, "Uraan, Pakistan." The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has also solicited tax-related proposals from stakeholders to broaden the tax base,

introduce progressive taxation, and simplify tax laws. He expressed the hope that the policy rate will also come down to a single digit and that the government will extend every possibility support to Capacity building and financing of the SMEs. He described the ICCI leadership proposals concerning the next budget as comprehensive and that in the similar way proposals from other Chambers will be taken and they will try their best to incorporate them in the budget for the ease of doing business and thereby economic growth of the country. In his address Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervez Malik said that the sitting government under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken bold

decisions for the economic well-being of the country. "He emphasized the need for export-led growth, stating, "Every entity in the country must contribute to exports." Malik praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for successfully averting a looming financial default, stabilizing the economy. He highlighted the government's achievements in reducing food inflation, the current account deficit, and pressure on the Pakistani rupee, thanks to prudent economic policies. He said that the government's initiatives are aimed at replacing the borrowing model with a sustainably growing economy, ensuring a brighter future for Pakistan. He added that over the power tariff reduction

very soon the Prime Minister himself will give good news to the nation. Moreover, the Prime Minister himself will also sit with the business community to listen to their problems for their resolution. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in his welcome address appreciated the federal government especially the Finance Minister and the Minister of State for Finance for the initiative of taking on board the Chambers with regard to compiling proposals for the next budget. He said that both the government and the business community together can pull the country out of the economic mess and put it on the road to sustainable growth.

CM Maryam sets new milestones in Punjab's uplift: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has lauded Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for her remarkable achievements in governance, stating that she is the first Chief Minister in the province's history to initiate over 80 projects within a year. According to Bokhari, more than 50 of these projects have already been completed, demonstrating CM Maryam Nawaz's dedication and efficiency in improving the province's infrastructure and services. Bokhari emphasised that Maryam Nawaz's leadership and performance are winning the hearts of the people. She pointed out that certain individuals are fearful of CM Maryam Nawaz's rising popularity and urged those who wish to compete with her to match her level of efficiency. She also criticized the spokespersons of opposing governments, who, according to her, are solely focused on finding faults in Punjab's initiatives rather than offering constructive solutions.—APP

Safe city issues over 900 e-challans in Jan

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP), through the Safe City e-challan system, have intensified efforts to enforce traffic laws, issuing over 900 e-challans in January alone. An ITP official told APP on Monday that ITP issued over 900 e-challans in January alone, while more than 277,000 tickets have been issued to date for various traffic violations. He said the implementation of the e-challan system, in line with international standards, ensures strict adherence to traffic laws in the federal capital. Using data from the Excise and Taxation department linked database, legal action is also being taken against violators. In this process, violators receive e-challan notifications on their mobile numbers, making the system more efficient and transparent.—DNA

Kashmir Solidarity Day commemorated at RCCI

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) organized a ceremony to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, reaffirming support for the people of Kashmir and their struggle for self-determination. The event also featured a documentary on Kashmir's history and a cultural tableau performed by children dressed in traditional Kashmiri attire, symbolizing the region's rich heritage and the spirit of its people. The ceremony commenced with the national anthems of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, setting a tone of unity and patriotism. In his welcome address, RCCI President Usman Shaukat emphasized the purpose of observing Kashmir Solidarity Day: "It aims to awaken the international community to play its role in the just resolution of the Kashmir issue and to send a strong message to the Kashmiri people that Pakistan's citizens and business community stand firmly with them. We must become an economic powerhouse so that our voice is heard and respected globally. Group Leader and Former President Sohail Altaf said that Kashmir will be free one day from Indian occupation. "Addressing the gathering, Sardar Masood Khan highlighted the sacrifices made by the Kashmiri people, stating, "Over 500,000 lives have been lost in the struggle. Our efforts must continue until the world listens and acknowledges our cause." Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan reiterated that "Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan." He also highlighted the plight of Kashmiri political prisoner Dr. Muhammad Qasim Faktoot, incarcerated for 29 years, describing him as the "Mandela of South Asia." He further spoke on Azad Kashmir's economic potential, rich in rare minerals, dense forests, tourism prospects, and a significant diaspora contributing globally. Mishal Malik, addressing the audience, condemned the silence of human rights organizations over the atrocities in Kashmir. She detailed the harsh conditions faced by Kashmiri leaders in Indian jails, subjected to third-degree torture. "The RSS has completely hijacked India. The Modi government seeks the death penalty for my husband, Yasin Malik, who remains imprisoned because he resists their oppressive agenda," she said.—DNA



KARACHI: Ambassador of Romania Dan Stoescu had productive work meeting with the board of Pakistan, Romania Business Council. Both sides talked about the road map for enhancing business contacts as well as projects related to trade, culture, media, education & tourism. DNA

AJK people stand shoulder to shoulder with their brethren in IIOJ&K

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that the government and people of Azad Kashmir stand shoulder to shoulder with their Kashmiri brethren in their struggle for right to self-determination. "Denouncing India's relentless repression in Indian occupied Kashmir. While addressing a reception hosted in his honour by the workers of Pakistan Peoples Party, in Neelum on Monday, the PM termed the liberated territory

(AJK) as a sanctuary of peace, the PM said that there was no comparison between Occupied Kashmir and Azad Kashmir. Describing freedom as the greatest blessing, he said there was no substitute for freedom. "The civil liberties being enjoyed by citizens in Azad Kashmir are not available to people in Occupied Kashmir", he remarked. Referring to the massive military presence in occupied Kashmir, the PM Haq stated that India had turned Kashmir into a military garrison. He said that without security no Indian leader, not even PM Narendra Modi or any

of his ministers, can visit Occupied Kashmir the way we do here in AJK. He said that there was a ban on hoisting the Kashmir flag in the entire occupied Kashmir, whereas in Azad Kashmir one could see the flag of Kashmir hosted a top of every building. He said that the present government had provided all possible resources for the development of Neelum Valley. He, however, maintained that deprivations of the last seventy years cannot be removed in a year or two. "It is for the first time in the history of Neelum that the highway remained open

for traffic up to Taubat despite severe weather conditions", the PM said. "Despite the deficit of 71 billion rupees, the government ensured provision of cheap electricity and flour and an unhindered development in the region", he added. On this occasion, the Prime Minister announced construction of fifty kilometers long roads for both the Neelum constituencies. After the historic health package, the PM said that a historic education package for Neelum would be announced soon. The incumbent government, he

said, released a grant of 1.2 billion rupees for the construction of Neelum Highway, established an RHC building for Halmat and created posts for doctors. The PM vowed to provide resources to end Neelum's backwardness. The PM thanked the Pakistan Army for providing a helicopter for health emergency response. The reception ceremony was also addressed by Law Minister Mian Abdul Waheed Advocate and Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and others.

Pakistan supporting Kashmir cause politically, diplomatically

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Monday said that Pakistan was supporting Kashmir cause politically, diplomatically and morally to pressurize India to impede its atrocities against innocent Kashmiri people who were struggling for fundamental right to self-determination. Addressing a press conference, Dr Tariq who is member of Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir, expressed the commitment that Pakistan and Kashmiris across the world would observe Kashmir Solidarity Day with enthusiasm and zeal to give strapping message to India that Pakistani people were standing with Kashmiris in this difficult time. He said that the present government and all previous governments of Pakistan had highlighted India's gruesome human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) at all available international forums. "We want resolution of Kashmir issue as per United Nations' Charters and all its resolutions to give Kashmiris plebiscite which is their long-lasting demands," he added.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

Feb 04/Sri Lanka	National Day
Feb 06/N. Zealand	National Day
Feb 06/Uganda	Army Day
Feb 11/Iran	Revolution day
Feb 16/DDR Korea	National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania	National Day
Feb 18/Gambia	National Day
Feb 19/Nepal	Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan	National Day
Feb 23/Brunei	National Day
Feb 23/Guyana	National Day
Feb 23/Russia	National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan	Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait	National Day

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Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
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MH.....5611116
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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Call for digital transformation in academic credentials

Dr. Qayyum highlighted that HEC has already initiated a comprehensive transformation activity to address these challenges. "The first phase of this process may be time-consuming, but we are designing it carefully. I am confident that within the next few months, the components will be developed and implemented, resolving these issues," he added

ISLAMABAD:Dr. Zia Ul Qayyum, Executive Director of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), has emphasized the importance of streamlining the degree verification process and eliminating the need for intermediaries. Talking in a recent podcast, he stated, "No one should be forced to pay agents for degree verification. If you approach HEC directly, you will not face disappointment. Why seek out third parties? Follow the policy and adopt the process," Dr. Qayyum highlighted

that HEC has already initiated a comprehensive transformation activity to address these challenges. "The first phase of this process may be time-consuming, but we are designing it carefully. I am confident that within the next few months, the components will be developed and implemented, resolving these issues," he added. He also revealed that HEC is refining the concept of a location data deposit. "If universities start providing trial data, our students will be able to carry a digital ac-

ademic passport. This passport will allow them to access services anywhere, with all their academic credentials achievable through technology." Dr. Qayyum shared an innovative idea of creating an end-to-end academic blockchain. "This blockchain will be secure, and as a student, I can grant permission for my documents to be shared with a specific university. Based on these documents, the university can admit me to an MPhil or PhD program. This model can also incorporate other

learning abilities." Reflecting on the evolution of higher education, Dr. Qayyum noted significant transitions over the years. "From my school days to now, universities have undergone massive changes. The transformations in the last four to five years necessitate further improvements in HEC's structure. Despite limited resources and challenging conditions, HEC has performed exceptionally well, with consistent government support." He concluded by stress-

ing the need for both short-term and long-term planning for HEC. "When policies are developed, improving and adapting them is not a bad thing. HEC was established with the goals of access, development, and equity, and it continues to strive toward these objectives." This push for digital transformation aims to simplify academic processes, enhance transparency, and empower students with secure, accessible credentials in an increasingly digital world.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD. Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Mr. Zach Harkenrider, Minister Counsellor for political affairs of the embassy of the united states of America.

Pakistan to lead global space dialogue with ICAST 2025

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) and the Institute of Space Technology (IST) are set to host the International Conference on Applications of Space Science and Technology (ICAST 2025) in November, marking a significant milestone in the country's journey towards global leadership in space applications. According to SUPARCO, the deadline for abstract submissions for the conference, scheduled to take place at IST, has been extended until February 07, 2025. Researchers, academics, industry experts, and students from around the world are encouraged to submit abstracts showcasing cutting-edge research and innovative space applications across various disciplines. Selected abstracts will advance to the full manuscript stage, offering contributors unparalleled visibility and the opportunity to present their work before a distinguished international audience. ICAST 2025, set to be the largest space science gathering ever hosted in Pakistan, will bring together global space leaders, visionary researchers, and pioneering industry professionals under the theme "Space for Sustainable Development." The event represents the convergence of IST's International Conference on Aerospace Science and Engineering (ICASE) and SUPARCO's International Conference on Space (ICS), creating a transformative platform to advance space science, foster innovation, and address pressing global challenges. The conference will cover a broad spectrum of space science and technology, including aeronautics and astronautics, satellite technology, positioning, navigation and timing (PNT), remote sensing and geographic information science, environmental science and climate change, information and communication technologies (ICT), astronomy and astrophysics, and space law, management, and outreach. These topics are designed to inspire transformative ideas and groundbreaking solutions that push the boundaries of space science while addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development. ICAST 2025 is more than just a scientific conference—it is a catalyst for innovation and collaboration. The event will feature keynote speeches from world-renowned space pioneers, interactive workshops, hands-on training sessions, and a cutting-edge product exhibition showcasing the latest advancements in space technology. Extensive networking opportunities will foster partnerships between academia, industry, and government sectors. Supported by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and the National Center of GIS and Space Applications (NCGSA), ICAST 2025 is set to become a landmark event, reinforcing Pakistan's growing role in the global space community. With its focus on sustainability and cutting-edge advancements, ICAST 2025 underscores Pakistan's commitment to positioning itself as a key player in the international space arena.—Agencies

SCBP welcomes transfer of judges to IHC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan (SCBAP) has welcomed the transfer of judges in the Islamabad High Court and said that Article 200 of the Constitution of Pakistan clearly and unequivocally allows the President of Pakistan to transfer a judge from one High Court to another. In a written statement issued by Mian Muhammad Rauf Atta, President SCBAP, has stated that SCBAP has always stood for the rule of

law, the independence of the judiciary and the supremacy of the constitution and in doing so we welcome and approve the transfer of judges to the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The Executive Committee of this Association has approved the recent transfers to the IHC through circulation. 'Article 200 of the Constitution is absolutely clear. It allows the President to transfer High Court judges with their consent and after

they have been transferred under the constitutional provisions. Needless to mention that the judges recently transferred to the IHC shall retain their seniority from the date of their initial appointments in the High Courts from which they have been transferred.' The IHC, when initially founded, was once regarded as the federal High Court, ensuring equal representation from all provinces and hailed as a judicial symbol of the federation. However, over time, that impression had diminished but has now been restored with recent transfers, particularly from smaller provinces such as Baluchistan.—APP

Governance-driven approach termed vital for restructuring Pak-Afghan ties

ISLAMABAD: Restructuring Pakistan-Afghanistan relations requires a departure from short-term policy fixes toward a comprehensive, strategic, and governance-driven approach. Since the erosion of the rule of law and the spread of divisive rhetoric fuel mistrust and instability, this approach must prioritize mutual recognition of sovereignty, the rejection of polarizing narratives, the restoration of the rule of law, public ownership in law enforcement, and institutional integrity. The views were reflected during a discussion followed by the keynote speech of Ambassador (r) Asif Durrani, Pakistan's former special representative on Afghanistan, in a roundtable on "Geopolitical Imperatives: Redefining Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations in a Post-Taliban Era," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Brigadier (r) Said Nazir, defense analyst, Noor-ul-Ain Naseem, policy



advisor, GIZ, Dr Farhat Taj, associate professor, University of Tromsø, Norway, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, Ambassador (r) Ayaz Wazir, Dr Lutfur Rehman, an expert on Afghanistan and FATA affairs, and other academics, former officials, and policy

experts. Ambassador (r) Asif Durrani highlighted that geopolitical challenges in Pak-Afghan relations, such as the complex tribal dynamics, cross-border trade issues, and refugee management, cannot be managed through conventional diplomacy or a garrison approach.—APP

Women vendors empowering families, driving informal economy

ISLAMABAD :For many individuals in Islamabad, women vending has become more than just a livelihood, it is a vital source of income and empowerment for some of society's most marginalized groups, including the unemployed, less educated, and those facing limited opportunities. In the bustling streets of the capital, these women are quietly playing an essential role in the local economy, often providing for their families and communities against the odds. As dawn breaks over Islamabad, a group of determined women can be seen setting up their stalls, offering fresh fruits, vegetables, and other essential goods. One such vendor is 35-year-old Fatima, who has been selling clothes and women's essentials at Peshawar Mor Sunday Bazar. In an interview with media, she shared her personal journey, explaining how starting her own stall was initially a struggle. But, driven by the need to provide for her children, she persevered. "Today, I am proud to say that, as the breadwinner of my family, I am able to give them a decent education and a comfortable life," she said. Fatima's story reflects the resilience of many women vendors in Islamabad, who, despite facing long working hours, meager profits, and numerous challenges, continue to work tirelessly for the well-being of their families. These women are not just surviving—they are thriving, becoming pillars of support for their communities. Afshi Safdar, another vendor, offered an insightful perspective on the role of women in vending. "Women who lack formal skills or education often turn to vending as a last resort," she said. "However, I must say that vending has empowered us to take control of our finances. It's been a game-changer for us." Afshi pointed out that the impact of these women extends beyond their immediate families. "We are the backbone of Islamabad's informal economy, providing essential goods and services to hundreds of people every day," she added, emphasizing the indispensable role they play in the local economy. In the words of Shakeela Sabeen, a regular customer, "I rely on these women vendors for my daily needs. They are always available, and their prices are affordable." Shakeela went on to note that vending is a challenging job that requires not only physical stamina but also expertise and strong negotiation skills. "It's a demanding profession that requires resilience, strategic thinking, and business acumen," she said. These women embody the spirit of empowerment seen across South Asia, where women are increasingly entering informal sectors like vending as a means of securing financial independence. In countries like Pakistan, where women often face cultural and economic barriers to entering the formal workforce, these vendors represent an important shift.—APP

Mobile phone imports decreases 7.46%

ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones into the country has witnessed a decrease of 7.46 percent during the first six months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$ 733.425 million during July-December (2024-25) as compared to the imports of US \$ 792.581 million during July-December (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones also dipped by 7.27 percent during the month of December 2024 when compared to the same month of last year. The import of mobiles into the country during December 2024 was recorded at \$ 163.257 million against the exports of \$176.063 million in December 2023. On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones however increased by 9.29 percent during December 2024, as compared to the imports of US \$149.375 million during November 2024, according to the data. It is pertinent to mention here that the overall merchandized exports from the country increased by 11.04 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year.—APP

ANF recovers over 12 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country recovered 12.636 kg drugs worth over Rs 20 million and arrested 10 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 500 grams hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near a university in Karachi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In two separate operations at Lahore International Airport, 69 cocaine-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of two foreign nationals going to Muscat. 570 grams ice was recovered from a parcel booked for New Zealand through a courier office in Karachi. 2.1 kg ice was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Cavalry Ground Masood Anwari Road, Lahore in Lahore and 2 suspects were arrested during the operation.—APP

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Briefs

MYL
announces
Kashmir
solidarity bike
rallies today

ISLAMABAD: The Muslim Youth League (MYL) President Haris Dar, on Monday, announced the Kashmir solidarity bike rallies on February 4, while all-party youth conferences will be organized in the four provincial capitals to unite the youth of the country for solidarity with Kashmiri brothers. A press release said that MYL, in collaboration with Kashmir Youth Alliance (KYA), would launch an awareness campaign across the country regarding the Kashmir freedom movement so that the youth could be mobilized to play a practical role in this struggle. Dar hailed the struggle of Kashmiri youth for independence and called that the Pakistani youth always stand with Kashmiri brothers and would never be reluctant for any sacrifices in the way of freedom of Kashmir. He reiterated the statement of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, that "Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan" and expressed determination that the youth of Pakistan would liberate this jugular vein at all costs. Meanwhile, KYA President, Dr. Mujahid Gilani, talking about the atrocities of the Indian army in occupied Kashmir, revealed that since 2019, the Indian forces have illegally detained more than 25,000 Kashmiris. He also mentioned the struggle of his family and said that his uncle, Dr. Qasim Fakto, has been in jail for 31 years, but he never compromised on principles. Similarly, his aunt Asia Andrabi has also been imprisoned since 2017, he added. He expressed his determination that the Kashmir freedom movement would be continued and no Indian coercion could divert them from their path.—APP

Crack down
on price
gouging, 15
shopkeepers
arrested

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad District Administration (ICT) cracked down on market profiteers during operations, arresting 15 shopkeepers for charging prices above the official rate list. Assistant Commissioners from City, Nellore and Industrial Area zones led the enforcement drive, targeting merchants who were exploiting consumers by selling goods at inflated prices. The coordinated action was part of a broader effort to protect consumer rights and maintain fair market practices. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon emphasized the administration's commitment to market regulation, stating that citizens should only pay prices as per the official price list. In addition to the arrests, authorities also conducted anti-encroachment operations and took action against the use of plastic bags, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to market management and environmental protection.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Former Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed speaks during a conference held in Islamabad to show solidarity with the Kashmiri people. Amir Jamat-e-Islami is also present on the occasion. —DNA

CIS's journey of transformation
leads to Pak digital future

The Tele-health services, backed by a network of professional doctors from the COMSATS-based Resource Center, now provide consultations in fields such as general medicine, pediatrics, dermatology, and gynecology

TASSWAR ABASS

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of the financial crisis that nearly brought it to its knees, COMSATS Internet Services (CIS) has emerged as a beacon of resilience and innovation. Over the last two years, the organization has not only weathered significant financial challenges but has also successfully reinvented itself, becoming a symbol of growth and technological advancement. What was once a company on the brink of collapse has now become a thriving institution, providing essential services that improve the lives of countless Pakistanis. Two years ago, CIS faced an uncertain future, grappling with severe financial difficulties. The organization was deep in debt, and the jobs of its 250 employees were at risk. The situation was dire. However, through a combination of strategic planning,

effective financial restructuring, and bold leadership, CIS managed to not only eliminate its deficit but also shift towards a financially stable and growth-oriented future. General Manager of Accounts and Finance, CIS, Mahmud Akhtar talking to the APP said, when Dr. Zakaria took charge, CIS was like a sinking ship, struggling to stay afloat amidst severe financial stress. His leadership brought structure, accountability, and a clear vision that helped us navigate through the crisis. A pivotal achievement in CIS's recovery was the expansion and revival of its Tele-health Centers, which had been on the verge of shutting down. These centers have since flourished, growing from 14 to 31 locations across Pakistan. By offering vital medical consultations in underserved and remote areas, CIS has improved access to healthcare services for thousands of people, especially those

who had previously been deprived of basic healthcare. The Tele-health services, backed by a network of professional doctors from the COMSATS-based Resource Center, now provide consultations in fields such as general medicine, pediatrics, dermatology, and gynecology. Dr. Nadia Rasheed, Consultant & Project Manager, Telehealth said that Telehealth Centres are providing virtual consultations and the expansion of these services is a testament to CIS's commitment to public welfare and its role in bridging the healthcare divide in Pakistan. CIS's financial recovery didn't stop with healthcare. The organization took a proactive approach to modernize its operations, starting with a significant overhaul of its technological infrastructure. One of the most notable advancements was the long-overdue modernization of its Data Center. By implementing cutting-edge technology, including

virtualization, high-performance cyber protection, and cloud computing capabilities, CIS improved its data processing efficiency while significantly reducing operational costs. These upgrades also ensured a more reliable and secure service for both public and private sector clients, establishing CIS as a leader in providing high-speed, dependable internet solutions. "Under the leadership of Executive Director Dr. Zakaria, we saw a complete turnaround. His strategic decisions, financial discipline, and ability to bring in new projects not only stabilized the company but also restored employee confidence. Today, CIS is back on its feet, stronger and more resilient than ever." General Manager of Administration and Human Resources, Abid Shah said. Further contributing to its recovery, CIS renegotiated key contracts with service providers, ensuring more cost-effective solutions without compromising

on quality. These negotiations not only reduced the organization's liabilities but also helped secure high-quality internet services at competitive rates. As a result, CIS was able to strengthen its financial footing while continuing to offer superior services to its customers, thus contributing to the overall improvement of Pakistan's digital infrastructure. This combination of strategic financial management and technological innovation has laid the groundwork for CIS's continued growth. The organization's recovery has allowed it to expand its services, enhance its infrastructure, and invest in new projects that benefit both its employees and the communities it serves. With a renewed focus on financial sustainability, CIS is now positioned to continue its expansion, particularly in its Tele-health services, and to play a critical role in Pakistan's digital and public health sectors.

CDNS revises target
of Rs 40b for Islamic
Finance in FY 2024-25

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has revised the annual collection target and set Rs 40 billion in investment in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year 2024-25, which will lead to growth in the country's Islamic economy. "The National Savings had issued the Islamic bonds for the promotion of the Islamic finance system, which will help the development of the Islamic economy in the country," the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday. Re-

plying to a question, he said the CDNS had achieved the target of Rs 75 billion during the last fiscal year (2023-24) from the Islamic bonds, and that was why it aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector. "Islamic finance now has a significant role in the global financial sector. A large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in the CDNS. Given the current market trend in the country, an ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he

added. Replying to another question, he said that the CDNS has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the saving culture in the country. He said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 percent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30th. The National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1.7 trillion for the year 2023-24; it is encouraging that this year, "We surpassed the 100 percent of the annual target." —APP

Interior
Minister
condemns
attack on
polio team

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the attack on an anti-polio team in Jamrud, which resulted in the martyrdom of Police Constable Abdul Khaliq. Expressing deep sorrow over the tragic incident, Minister Naqvi paid tribute to the slain officer, acknowledging his dedication and sacrifice while on duty. He extended heartfelt condolences to Abdul Khaliq's family, assuring them of the government's support. "Police Constable Abdul Khaliq attained the highest rank of martyrdom while protecting those working to secure our children's future. —APP

SSP orders
strict crackdown
on land mafia

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations, Muhammad Shoaib Khan on Monday chaired a high-level meeting and outlined a strict action plan against land mafia, kite flying, and illegal weapons, emphasizing their complete eradication. A public relations officer told APP that the meeting, attended by all SHOs of Islamabad's police stations, focused on crime prevention and public safety. He said the SSP directed officers to closely monitor habitual offenders, enhance effective patrolling, and ensure the arrest of those involved in robbery, theft, and vehicle snatching cases. He emphasized utilizing all available resources to dismantle criminal networks, particularly those engaged in serious crimes. He said a crackdown on wanted criminals and absconders must be intensified, and no leniency should be shown to land grabbers, drug peddlers, illegal arms holders, and those involved in kite flying. Legal action should be taken against such elements without discrimination, he added. He said the SSP further directed officers to ensure the swift resolution of public complaints at the police station level and take strict action against corruption, misconduct, or any inappropriate behavior. He emphasized that officers must maintain exemplary discipline, as ensuring citizens' safety remains the top priority, with no room for negligence.—APP

Tax target
failure
worrying

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Monday that the failure to achieve the tax target in January is regrettable. He said that the tax net should be expanded instead of increasing the burden on taxpayers. All buying and selling types should be digitized to discourage cash transactions so that the situation can improve. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the tax shortfall against the target in January was Rs 85 billion, while the total tax shortfall during the first seven months of the current fiscal year has reached Rs 468 billion. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that one of the reasons for the tax shortfall is the policy of continuously increasing the burden on taxpayers. In contrast, the expansion of the tax net is not taken seriously. Mian Zahid Hussain said there is a lack of trust between the public and the tax-collecting institutions.

Police deploy
over 1700
cops for anti-
polio drive
security

RAWALPINDI :Rawalpindi district police have deployed over 1,700 cops across Rawalpindi to secure the anti-polio campaign, a police spokesman said here on Monday. He informed that the police personnel will provide security to 772 teams of polio workers, aiming to ensure the safety of both teams and the public during the drive. Under the security plan, the Elite Force, Dolphin units, and patrolling police will work together to safeguard the vaccination teams as they conduct door-to-door immunisations. Rawalpindi Police are utilizing all available resources to protect the citizens' lives and property," the spokesman said, emphasising a commitment to uninterrupted healthcare outreach. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Kashif Zulfikar said that best possible arrangements have been made to ensure foolproof security for the polio workers. Tight security measures reflect a proactive approach by the law enforcement to address potential threats and support public health initiatives aimed at eradicating polio in the region.—APP

PNCA to host
two-day
cultural events
on Kashmir
Day

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan will arrange a series of cultural events from February 4-5 at Pakistan to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day. According to an official of PNCA, the events are aimed at highlighting the struggles, sacrifices, and resilience of the Kashmiri people through various artistic expressions, including documentaries, photography, theatre, puppetry, and traditional folk music. The activities will begin with a special documentary screening and a photographic exhibition, running from February 04 to 05 in the main lobby of PNCA. The exhibition will feature a powerful visual narrative of the historical and ongoing struggle of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), along with captivating images showcasing the region's breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage. On February 05, a special puppet show will take place at PNCA Hall to engage younger audiences by creatively depicting the resilience of Kashmiris through the art of puppetry. While a theatre drama titled "Kathra" will be staged as a part of the activities. The play, set in a courtroom, symbolizes the oppression faced by Kashmiris and their unyielding struggle for justice and self-determination.—APP

Forever in my heart: A tribute
to the man who shaped my soul

OBITUARY

FAWAD HASSAN

On 28 December 2024, a man of unparalleled integrity and grace, Justice Ijazul Hassan, ascended to heaven. To me, he was not just a father; he was my guiding star, my unwavering pillar of strength, and the moral compass that shaped my life. Abu was the embodiment of love, honesty, and resilience—a man whose legacy transcends time, leaving an indelible mark on all who had the honor of knowing him. Abu's life was a masterpiece in integrity, lived with purpose and unwavering faith. As a father, he led by example, teaching me the most profound lessons not through words but through the silent strength of

his actions. Whenever I falter or face challenges, it is his enduring presence—gentle yet firm—that reminds me of who I am and the values he instilled in me. His character was my fortress, shielding me from the temptations of life and guiding me toward righteousness. In every decision I make, I hear his unspoken words, pushing me to uphold the honor of his name. Abu's simplicity was his brilliance. He was a man of humble beginnings, yet his strength of character made him extraordinary. When he joined the judicial service in 1974 with a salary of just PKR 300 per month, he gave every rupee to my mother with unwavering trust and respect, knowing she would nurture our home with love and care. Together, they built a sanctuary filled with warmth, laughter, and mutual devotion—a home where values were lived, not just

taught. The love Abu shared with my mother was nothing short of legendary. For 50 years, their bond was a testament to the power of love and respect. He would call her every night at 9 pm during official tours, a small act that carried the weight of a lifetime of devotion. I've witnessed their silent tears during partings, their uncontainable joy upon reunions, and their boundless empathy for each other in every moment. Their love was not a fairy tale—it was a living example of what it means to truly cherish another human being. Abu's affection for my mother was a love story unmatched, a legacy of devotion that will forever inspire me. As a judge, Abu's integrity was his hallmark. He viewed his role as a sacred trust, delivering justice with fairness, compassion, and an unyielding commitment to the truth. He never allowed personal

interests or external pressures to sway his decisions, standing resolute even in the face of challenges. His dedication to justice was not just a duty; it was his life's calling—a means to serve society and uphold the principles he held dear. But Abu's greatness extended far beyond the courtroom. His humility, empathy, and generosity touched countless lives. Quietly and without fanfare, he supported those in need, embodying the spirit of giving that inspires me to this day. His life was a reflection of selflessness, showing me that even small acts of kindness can create profound ripples of change. In my professional journey, Abu's legacy of honesty and integrity has been my shield. Whenever doubt or temptation arises, I think of him—his steadfast commitment to doing what is right, regardless of the cost. His principles are so deeply rooted

in me that they guide me even in his absence, shaping every decision and action I take. His influence is a constant reminder that character is the true measure of greatness. Beyond his public and familial roles, Abu was an extraordinary human being. He lived a life of simplicity, finding joy in his faith, his family, and his duty. He avoided the trappings of materialism, focusing instead on the values that truly matter. His meals were modest, his attire unassuming, but his soul was grand. His humility, grace, and unwavering principles left an indelible mark on all who crossed his path. Abu's love for his family knew no bounds. He was not just a provider but a nurturer, a mentor, and a friend. He taught me that true strength lies in compassion, that true greatness is found in service to others, and that the measure of a life well-lived is the love and respect one earns. His life was a reflection

of these ideals—a shining example of what it means to live with purpose, honor, and love. His passing has left a void that words cannot fill, but his legacy is eternal. It lives on in the values he instilled in me, in the countless lives he touched, and in the lessons he imparted through his extraordinary life. Abu's story is not one of material achievements or worldly accolades; it is a story of character, love, and unwavering faith. It is a story that will continue to inspire me and those who knew him for generations to come. May Allah grant my beloved father the highest ranks in Jannah and a place of eternal peace. Abu, you are forever in my heart, my guiding light, and my greatest source of pride. I am eternally grateful to have been your son, and I pray to live a life that honors your memory and keeps your legacy alive. *The writer is his son and Civil Servant of Pakistan.*

Shifting South Asia's geopolitical landscape

WITHIN a span of six months, South Asia's geopolitical landscape has undergone profound changes. Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina's removal from power in August was followed by the conclusion of a border agreement between China and India in October and the Indian foreign secretary meeting the Afghan foreign minister in Dubai last month. Each of these developments signal shifting geopolitical alignments across the region. In Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina had been a key regional partner for India. Her departure has prompted New Delhi's long-time adversary Pakistan to make inroads into the country. Evidence of this can be seen with Dhaka's announcement of a relaxation of visa rules for Pakistani nationals, the establishment of direct sea links between the ports of Karachi and Chittagong, and an easing of trade restrictions between both countries. This month, Bangladesh is set to participate in Pakistan's Aman naval exercise in Karachi. Underpinning this rapprochement is a string of high-level exchanges between Dhaka and Islamabad. This includes a visit to Bangladesh by Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar this month and the head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency Asim Malik last month. This follows several meetings between Muhammad Yunus, the head of Bangladesh's interim government, and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. While it would be too simplistic to view Dhaka's relations with New Delhi and Islamabad in zero-sum terms, these developments signify a shift in Bangladesh's foreign relations. In particular, it represents a change of fortune for Islamabad, which had long been seen in a negative light following Bangladesh's bloody secession from Pakistan in 1971. Under the Hasina government, opposition parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami came under scrutiny for their historically close connections to Pakistan. Now those same groups are part of, or are supporting, Bangladesh's interim government. Bangladesh protests widen to target top officials appointed during Sheikh Hasina's rule. The China-India border agreement has helped to de-escalate tensions following the deadly clash in 2020. The disengagement entails the resumption of patrols and grazing rights in two contested areas in eastern Ladakh and Aksai Chin. A meeting last month between Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong also discussed the revival of "people-centric" initiatives. The agreement does not resolve their long-standing border dispute, with neither side rescinding claims to disputed territories and no agreement over the delineation of their western border, known as the Line of Actual Control. A sizeable military presence remains on both sides with no signs of an imminent troop reduction. The border deal also makes no reference to other disputed areas. Neither does it address contentious issues such as water disputes, which threaten to flare up amid Beijing's plans to build the world's largest dam along the Yarlung Tsangpo, or Brahmaputra, which traverses both countries. Nonetheless, the agreement is an acknowledgement by both sides of the need to establish guard rails in the bilateral relationship as they face more pressing concerns at home and abroad.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 244

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

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Palestinian facilities' demolition campaigns

ISRAEL has been escalating issuing demolition orders against Palestinian facilities in the West Bank and in 1948 Occupied Palestine under the pretext that they are built without construction permits. The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) have ordered the demolition of seven houses in Furush Beit Dajan village east of Nablus city, as part of an unprecedented demolition campaign, according to head of the village council, Tawfiq Hajj Mohammed. In Taquu village south of Bethlehem city, the Israeli bulldozers proceeded to destroy a two-story house belonging to the siblings Usama and Tayseer Sulaiman. A complete siege was imposed on the area banning citizens from approaching it. Meanwhile, a Palestinian citizen was forced to self-demolish his house in Wadi Ara in 1948 Occupied Palestine to avoid paying exorbitant fines. Moreover, the Israeli bulldozers razed Al Taqwa mosque in Sur Baher village to the south of Jerusalem last Wednesday. Furthermore, the IOF demolished Hamza mosque in the Jenin refugee camp to the north of the West Bank, Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf stated, adding that such a practice violates the international laws and conventions. The Ministry of Awqaf and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs labeled the Israeli demolition of the mosque as a grave violation against the Palestinian people and sanctities. In another incident, the IOF raided an-Noa'man village east of Bethlehem, delivering demolition notices against 45 houses, in an attempt to destroy the entire village. Jamal al-Daraawi, head of the village council, affirmed that such orders aim at forcibly displacing the residents of the village and annexing it to the borders of the Israeli municipality in Jerusalem, pointing out that the Israeli military court imposed a property tax against each home in the village a year and a half ago. Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation authorities have destroyed homes of Bedouin villagers in Al-Araqib village in the Negev for the 235th time in a repeated attempt to displace the villagers. Israel has destroyed about 8,765 Palestinian facilities, including 3,107 agricultural buildings and 2,725 houses, between January 2010 and January 2025, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Demolition campaigns are not only meant to forcibly displace Palestinian people from their homes but they also aim to break the determination of the Palestinian people and resistance. The Israeli Knesset had approved a draft law allowing settlers to take over direct legal ownership of land and assets owned by Palestinians, which further encourages settlement activities on Palestinian lands.



Kashmir and Pakistan: A union of faith, history, and destiny

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The geographical position of Kashmir further elevates its strategic importance. It serves as a natural gateway between South Asia and Central Asia, making it a crucial point for trade, security, and defense. The Line of Control (LoC) remains a volatile frontier where tensions frequently escalate, demanding continuous vigilance from Pakistan's armed forces. The presence of Indian military installations in the region and its growing defense cooperation with external powers threaten...

KASHMIR has always held a central place in the heart of Pakistan, not merely as a geographical entity but as an inseparable part of its ideological and strategic framework. Its significance transcends political disputes and territorial claims, deeply intertwining with the spiritual, economic, and historical essence of Pakistan. It was this profound connection that led Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to declare, "Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan." This statement was neither rhetorical nor confined to a mere strategic perspective; rather, it encapsulated the essence of Kashmir's integral role in the very identity of Pakistan. Religiously, Kashmir is an inseparable part of the Muslim world. Islam spread across the valley centuries ago, shaping its culture, traditions, and way of life. The region has produced renowned saints and scholars who played a vital role in spreading Islamic teachings across South Asia. The majority of Kashmir's population, adhering to Islam, has historically maintained strong religious, cultural, and emotional ties with the Muslims of Pakistan. The Partition of 1947 was a manifestation of the Two-Nation Theory, based on the distinct religious and cultural identities of Muslims and Hindus. It was, therefore, only natural that Kashmir, with its overwhelming Muslim majority, would align with Pakistan. However, the unjust and forceful occupation of the region by India contradicted the very basis of this division, leading to an unresolved conflict that continues to weigh heavily on the collective conscience of the Muslim world. The struggle of the Kashmiri people for self-determination is not just a political battle; it is a religious duty for Pakistan to support them. The oppression, persecution, and human rights violations inflicted upon the people of Kashmir are a grave concern for the Muslim Ummah. The desecration of mosques, restrictions on religious gatherings, and brutal crackdowns during Islamic observances underscore the systematic efforts to

suppress their faith. The spirit of Muslim brotherhood and the obligation to stand against injustice make Kashmir a cause that resonates deeply with Pakistanis. It is not just a land dispute; it is a matter of faith, dignity, and moral responsibility. Beyond its religious significance, Kashmir is crucial for Pakistan's survival and prosperity. The valley is the origin of the major rivers that sustain Pakistan's agriculture, the backbone of its economy. The Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers flow from the Himalayas through Kashmir into Pakistan, providing water for irrigation, drinking, and hydroelectric power generation. India's control over these water sources poses a perpetual threat to Pakistan's food and energy security. The Indus Waters Treaty, though an international agreement, has been repeatedly challenged by Indian policies aimed at altering the natural flow of these rivers. The potential weaponization of water remains an alarming possibility that underscores why Kashmir is more than just a territorial concern—it is a lifeline for Pakistan's agricultural and economic stability. The geographical position of Kashmir further elevates its strategic importance. It serves as a natural gateway between South Asia and Central Asia, making it a crucial point for trade, security, and defense. The Line of Control (LoC) remains a volatile frontier where tensions frequently escalate, demanding continuous vigilance from Pakistan's armed forces. The presence of Indian military installations in the region and its growing defense cooperation with external powers threaten Pakistan's security. Control over Kashmir, or at the very least, ensuring that it does not become a hub of hostility against Pakistan, is essential for maintaining regional stability. Quaid-e-Azam's assertion that Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein was not just a statement of political ambition; it was an acknowledgment of an existential truth. The oppression of the Kash-

miri people, the economic implications of losing control over water resources, and the broader strategic vulnerabilities make Kashmir an inseparable part of Pakistan's national interest. The ideological connection, rooted in the very foundation of Pakistan, further cements its place in the national consciousness. Sir Owen Dixon, the former UN mediator on Kashmir, observed in his report to the United Nations in 1950, "The only just solution to the Kashmir dispute is a plebiscite under international supervision, allowing the people to determine their own future." Yet, despite international recognition of Kashmir as a disputed territory, the voices of its people continue to be suppressed. For over seven decades, Pakistan has stood by Kashmir, advocating its cause on diplomatic fronts, raising its voice in international forums, and extending moral and material support to its people. While global powers have often remained indifferent or complicit in India's oppressive policies, the resilience of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan's unwavering stance continue to keep the issue alive. The challenge remains formidable, but history has shown that no force can permanently suppress the will of the people. The significance of Kashmir for Pakistan is not a matter of debate; it is a reality deeply embedded in its national, religious, and strategic fabric. The vision of Quaid-e-Azam, the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people, and the continued struggle for their rightful place in the world remain a collective responsibility of Pakistan. It is a cause that transcends political divides and resonates with every heart that believes in justice, freedom, and faith. Kashmir is not just an issue; it is an unfinished chapter of history that demands resolution in accordance with the aspirations of its people. Until that day comes, Pakistan will continue to stand firm, for Kashmir is not just a part of its geography—it is its soul, its faith, and its jugular vein.

A memorable journey to Swat

Nawal Fawad



The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we set out to visit Mahodand Lake, one of the most iconic and picturesque locations in the Kalam Valley. The journey to the lake was filled with excitement and anticipation. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a stunning sight: a crystal-clear lake nestled amidst snow-covered mountains. The tranquil waters of Mahodand Lake reflected the surrounding peaks, creating a picture-perfect scene that felt...

THE desire to explore the world and witness its breathtaking beauty has always dominated my mind. Recently, I had the privilege of fulfilling this aspiration when the administration of Punjab College, Sahiwal, organized an exciting trip to Kalam, Swat. As soon as I heard about the trip, I knew it was an opportunity I couldn't afford to miss. I eagerly sought my mother's permission to join the excursion, and once she approved, I began preparing for the adventure. Packing all the essentials and preparing provisions for the journey, I felt a mix of anticipation and excitement. My two younger sisters enthusiastically helped with my preparations and quickly got ready to accompany me. To ensure a safe and comfortable trip, the college principal made thoughtful arrangements for transportation, hiring experienced drivers and well-maintained vehicles from Lahore. These arrangements reassured both students and parents about the journey's safety. While the thought of traveling across long and mountainous roads to Swat was somewhat daunting, the thrill of the adventure far outweighed any apprehension. Finally, the much-awaited day arrived. With hearts full of excitement, we boarded the bus and departed from Sahiwal, heading toward Islamabad. The journey was made enjoyable by the comfortable seating arrangements on the bus, which helped alleviate any sense of exhaustion. Our first stop was at Bhera, a familiar and nostalgic place for me as it was a regular halt during my past trips to Islamabad. At Bhera, we enjoyed a delightful meal at a local restaurant, which set a cheerful tone for the rest of the journey. Resuming our travels, we passed through the vibrant landscapes of Islamabad, Mardan, and Malakand. The scenic beauty along the way was nothing short of mesmerizing. Towering mountains, lush greenery, and the sun casting its golden rays over the landscape created a serene and captivating atmosphere. It felt as though God was granting my long-cherished wish to witness nature's splendor firsthand. As the bus moved steadily along the winding roads, the journey seemed effortless, like a silk thread gliding smoothly through fabric. We reached Swat in the early hours of the morning, around 6 a.m., greeted by the cool, crisp air of the valley. Though everyone was

exhausted and sleep-deprived, the college administration warmly welcomed us with a delicious breakfast. This thoughtful gesture reinvigorated us, and we eagerly prepared to explore the enchanting valley. Our first destination was Mingora, a bustling town in Swat, where we got a glimpse of the region's vibrant culture and industrious people. The streets were alive with activity, and the markets were teeming with vendors and buyers engaged in lively trade. The locals' dedication to their daily routines reflected their strong work ethic, leaving a lasting impression on us. By midday, we reached Malam Jabba, a popular tourist destination known for its breathtaking beauty. The journey to Malam Jabba was an adventure in itself, with narrow, winding roads leading us through awe-inspiring mountainous terrain. Upon arrival, the sight of snow-clad mountains surrounding the valley, their majestic peaks glistening under the sunlight, greeted us. The atmosphere at Malam Jabba was vibrant, with tourists from all over Pakistan gathered to experience its natural beauty. People bundled up in gloves and warm coats roamed the area, marveling at the snow-covered scenery. The college administration had arranged for us to take a chairlift ride, which offered a bird's-eye view of the stunning valley below. The experience was both thrilling and serene, as we soaked in the panoramic views of the snow-laden landscape. Though reluctant to leave Malam Jabba's enchanting beauty, we followed the college administration's schedule and boarded the bus for the next leg of our journey to Kalam. The journey to Kalam was an unforgettable experience. As we ascended higher into the mountains, the air grew colder, and the landscape became even more captivating. It felt as though we were soaring above the mountain peaks, surrounded by clouds that seemed to embrace the valley below. The natural beauty of Kalam was nothing short of a masterpiece, a testament to the grandeur of God's creation. We reached Kalam in the evening and checked into the Holiday Inn Hotel. By this time, fatigue had taken its toll, and most students were eager to rest. However, the lively marketplace, illuminated by twinkling lights, was too inviting to resist. After enjoying a hearty meal at a local restaurant, we explored the market, which was brimming with unique handicrafts and souvenirs. The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we set out to

visit Mahodand Lake, one of the most iconic and picturesque locations in the Kalam Valley. The journey to the lake was filled with excitement and anticipation. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a stunning sight: a crystal-clear lake nestled amidst snow-covered mountains. The tranquil waters of Mahodand Lake reflected the surrounding peaks, creating a picture-perfect scene that felt almost surreal. We spent the day boating on the lake, savoring hot samosas, and capturing countless photographs to preserve the memories. Despite the biting cold, time seemed to fly as we reveled in the lake's serene beauty. By the time we returned to the hotel in the evening, we were filled with a sense of fulfillment and gratitude for the experience. That evening, the college administration organized a bonfire for the students. Gathered around the warm flames, we enjoyed music, laughter, and lively conversations that created an atmosphere of camaraderie and joy. The bonfire continued until midnight, leaving us with cherished memories of our time in Kalam. Before retiring for the night, we visited the local market once again to purchase gifts for our loved ones. The vibrant energy of the marketplace, coupled with the warm hospitality of the locals, made the shopping experience truly enjoyable. The next morning marked the end of our unforgettable journey. After breakfast, we reluctantly bid farewell to the beautiful valley of Swat and began our journey back to Sahiwal. As the bus retraced its path through the mountainous roads, I couldn't help but reflect on the incredible experiences and memories we had created during the trip. This journey to Swat was more than just a vacation; it was an opportunity to connect with nature, explore a rich culture, and bond with fellow students. It reminded me of the importance of stepping out of our comfort zones to discover the beauty and diversity of the world around us. Lastly, I am deeply grateful to Sir Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer for encouraging me to document the delightful memories of this journey. His guidance has inspired me to cherish and share the experiences that have enriched my life. This unforgettable trip to Swat will forever remain etched in my memory as a testament to the wonders of exploration and the joy of discovering new horizons.

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Briefs

Imran criticises 'establishment's...'

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reconsider policies and called for the formation of a judicial commission. Separately, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan rejected notion of a "policy shift" after letter to army chief, saying that Imran wrote the letter in capacity as former prime minister. In the letter, he said, Imran emphasised the "need to reevaluate policies", adding the text of the letter will be made public today. Quoting the PTI founder, Barrister Gohar said that his party does not want chaos as "Pakistan Army is ours". The letter comes weeks after PTI leaders — Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan — met the army chief, with the party's chairman saying that they discussed the overall security situation.

Judges' transfer to IHC...

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working to address concerns and would continue efforts in this regard. "I will meet with all judges, including those of the high courts, and with time, everything will be resolved," he added. Three judges — from Sindh, Balochistan, and Lahore — had been transferred to the IHC last week, drawing severe criticism from the legal fraternity. Justice Sarfraz Dogar from Lahore High Court, Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro from Sindh High Court and Justice Muhammad Asif from Balochistan High Court were among those transferred to the federal territory's court. They have begun their duties as well.

'Civilians cannot be...'

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appeals against the trial of civilians in military courts. Headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, the bench included Justices Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Musarat Hilali, Naem Akhtar Afghan and Shahid Bilal Hassan. Advocate Hussain submitted that all five judges of the Supreme Court who gave verdict against the trial of civilians in military court did not agree that the trial procedure in military courts is transparent. Justice Rizvi questioned him whether there was no difference between those who carry out (bomb) explosions and ordinary civilians? Advocate Hussain responded that he was not arguing in defence of any terrorist. If civilians could be court-martialled, he argued, the 21st constitutional amendment would not have been necessary.

PPP calls for implement...

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both parties failed to win enough seats to form the majority government. Under the power-sharing formula, PPP did not join the PM Shehbaz's cabinet, however, it accepted top constitutional offices including the presidency. In addition to this, Senate chairmanship, slots of Balochistan chief minister and National Assembly deputy speaker, governorships of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were given to the Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari-led party. And in return, PML-N won PPP's support in forming governments in Centre and Punjab.

Son of Afghan...

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apparently referred to an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in the Kulachi area of KP's Dera Ismail Khan district on January 31, during which four terrorists were killed. "According to sources, four terrorists of Fitnah Al Khawarij were killed by the security forces during a successful operation in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan a few days back," the report stated.

COAS hockey c'ship heats up with intense matches

Crescent Hockey Club Sargodha triumphs over Burni Club Quetta 4-2



SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Crescent Hockey Club Sargodha defeated Burni Hockey Club Quetta 4-2 in the first match of the final round of the ongoing 2nd COAS



Inter-Club Hockey Championship here at the Manzoorul Hassan Hockey Stadium on Monday. Abdullah scored three goals and Nehran scored one goal from the winners. From Burni Club Imran and Wasay scored one goal each. In the second match Gojra Sports defeated National Hock-

ey Club, Karachi 2-0. Azan scored both goals. In the third match Tiger Hockey Club Bahawalpur defeated Sami Abid Hockey Club Hyderabad 4-1. Zubair Lateef scored three goals and Zeeshan Bilal netted one goal from the winners. From Hyderabad Mustafa Laghari scored the lone goal.

Mohamed Salah strikes as Liverpool beat Bournemouth

The victory extends Liverpool's lead to nine points over second-placed Arsenal

LONDON: Mohamed Salah scored twice to take Liverpool nine points clear at the top of the Premier League by beating Bournemouth 2-0 on Saturday, while third-placed Nottingham Forest smashed Brighton 7-0. Salah's double took him above Frank Lampard as the sixth highest goalscorer in Premier League history with 178 goals on another significant day in the Reds' charge towards a record-equaling 20th English top-flight title. Bournemouth had not lost in 12 games in all competitions and beaten Arsenal and Manchester City at home earlier this season. The Cherries can count themselves unfortunate not to have extended that run as they hit the woodwork either side of half-time through Antoine Semenyo and Marcus Tavernier. Bournemouth were also furious over the awarding of a penalty that opened

the scoring on the half hour mark as Cody Gakpo appeared to clip his own heels as he entered the box rather than being tripped by Lewis Cook. VAR did not intervene to overturn referee Darren England's original decision to point to the spot and Salah ruthlessly rifled home the resulting spot-kick for his 20th Premier League goal of the season. Bournemouth pressed in vain for an equaliser after the break as the in-form Justin Kluivert missed two big chances either side of Tavernier's strike off the post. But one moment of magic from Salah sealed a massive three points in the title race when he cut inside onto his favoured left foot and curled into the top corner. "It feels good to be scoring goals, to be winning, but my main target this season is to win the Premier League with the team so we must keep going," said Mo-

hamed Salah, whose future at Anfield beyond this season remains unclear. Second-placed Arsenal have a mountain to climb if they are to rein in Arne Slot's men and host defending champions Manchester City on Sunday. Forest moved level on points with the Gunners thanks to a scintillating performance that blew Brighton away at the City Ground. NunoEspirito Santo's men had been beaten 5-0 by Bournemouth last weekend but bounced back in style with Chris Wood netting a hat-trick. Morgan Gibbs-White, Neco Williams and Jota Silva were also on target for Forest after Lewis Dunk's own goal opened the floodgates. "After what happened last week, the answer was good," said Forest boss NunoEspirito Santo. "You get punched, you get up - fantastic!" The two-time European champions are on course for a place in the Champions League as they opened up a six-point cushion on fifth-placed Newcastle, who blew the lead to lose 2-1 at home to Fulham. — Agencies

Mitchell Starc opens up on retirement plans

Starc last played a BBL match in the 2014-15 season for the Sixers

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Australia's experienced pacer Mitchell Starc commented on the prospects of his retirement from the Big Bash League (BBL). The left-arm pacer, who is a regular part of Australia's national teams across formats, last played a BBL match in the 2014-15 season for Sydney Sixers. During the recently-concluded edition of the BBL, Starc had taken a 10-day break to get ample rest between the five-match home Test series against India and his flight for Sri Lanka for the ongoing series. The left-arm pacer may experience equally packed schedule in the next Australian summer as after the conclusion of the Ashes on January 8, the former champions are set to tour Pakistan for a three-match T20I series in February. Australia are likely to field a full-strength side for the series as it will be crucial leading up to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, set to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. The tight scheduling has left Mitchell Starc unsure about his BBL future. "I don't know, to be honest," he said at the Australian team's hotel in Galle.

Pak to receive Saudi oil worth...

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The signing ceremony was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, federal ministers, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki and relevant authorities. PM Shehbaz welcomed the signing of Oil Import Financing Facility according to which Pakistan will receive oil from Saudi Arabia on deferred payment for one year amounting to US \$ 1.20 billion. This project will strengthen Pakistan's economic resilience by securing a stable supply of petroleum products while reducing immediate fiscal burdens. SFD will provide an amount of US\$ 41 million for the Gravity Flow Water Supply Scheme at Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shall enhance access to clean drinking water for 150,000 local people of Mansehra (and will be sufficient to meet the demand by 2040 by providing water to 201,249 people) improving overall public health and quality of life.

PM Shehbaz calls for national...

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His visit came days after 18 eighteen soldiers were martyred while thwarting an "act of terrorism" in Balochistan, adding that 23 terrorists were killed in subsequent clearance operations. In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the terrorists attempted to establish roadblocks in the general area of Mangocher in Kalat district. "On behalf of inimitable and heroic forces, this cowardly act of terrorism was aimed at disrupting the peaceful environment of Balochistan by targeting mainly innocent civilians." It said that security forces and law enforcement agencies were immediately mobilised, "who successfully thwarted the evil design of terrorists and sent twelve terrorists to hell, ensuring security and protection of the local populace".

Swedish court finds Quran...

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His fellow campaigner, Iraqi refugee Salwan Momika, was shot dead last week on the day he had been due to receive his verdict in a parallel case. No suspect has been charged yet in that killing; five people were detained but later released. Sweden's prime minister has said a foreign state may have been behind it. The 2023 burnings of the Holy Quran made the balance between free speech rights and rules protecting ethnic and religious groups into a major issue for Sweden, its Nordic neighbours and other European countries. The Stockholm district court said in a statement Najem, 50, and Momika had desecrated Quran in various ways and made offensive statements directed towards Islam, representatives of the religion and activities in mosques. Najem was found guilty of hate crimes for "having expressed contempt for the Muslim ethnic group because of their religious beliefs on four occasions", it said.

President Zardari...

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cover a broad spectrum of Pakistan-China relations, with a focus on economic and trade cooperation, security collaboration, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The two sides will also exchange views on regional and global geopolitical developments and cooperation in multilateral forums. In addition to official talks, President Zardari will attend the inaugural ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, at the special invitation of the Chinese government. His participation highlights growing cultural and diplomatic exchanges between the two nations. Pakistan and China share a long-standing alliance, often described as an "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership."

Fans turn up in large number as tickets for CT go on sale

The eight-team tournament is set to commence on February 19

DNA

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: The physical tickets' sale for the highly-anticipated matches of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 drew an overwhelming response from cricket fans, who flocked to the designated centres here to secure a seat for themselves. According to the details, long queues of cricket enthusiasts were seen outside the designated centres after counters at private courier service offices were made operational for the marquee event tickets. The sale of physical tickets ran from 4 pm to 6 pm. As per the rules, four tickets would be issued against one national identity card. Meanwhile, online tickets booked today will be issued on February 6, while the home delivery will be made on February 8. The opening match of the Champions Trophy 2025 between hosts Pakistan and New Zealand, scheduled to be played at the National Bank Stadium, was the hot pick amongst cricket fans. The minimum ticket price is set at 1,000 PKR, while the highest ticket price is 25,000 PKR Gallery.

Espanyol stun Real Madrid as Atletico cut LaLiga lead

Romero's 85th minute strike snatches victory for relegation-battling hosts

MADRID: Real Madrid stumbled to a shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Espanyol on Sunday which left them leading La Liga by a single point. Carlos Romero's 85th minute strike snatched victory for the relegation-battling hosts, provisionally 17th. Atletico Madrid pulled within a point of Los Blancos with a 2-0 win against Mallorca earlier, ahead of next weekend's crunch derby clash at the Santiago Bernabeu. Real Madrid were left furious after Romero was only booked for a cynical foul on KylianMbappe before going on to net the winner. However, Carlo Ancelotti's side played far within themselves and did not do enough to take anything from what seemed on paper an inviting fixture. "Espanyol played a very good game in my opinion, they defended very well, they did what they had to do. Could we have done more? Yes," Ancelotti told reporters. The Italian coach was angry about the decision not to send off Romero. "This foul, the decision the referee and VAR took was inexplicable, everyone saw it," continued the coach. "It's important to protect the players. It was a clear foul, a very ugly tackle, lucky there's no serious injury.

"To us it's inexplicable that they didn't send him off." Romero admitted he felt bad about scything down the French superstar. "I knew Kylian is impossible to stop when he's running, I stopped him how I could, it was a bit ugly," Romero told DAZN. "I didn't like doing it and I said sorry. That's it and there's no more to it." Espanyol largely kept the Spanish and European champions at bay in the first half. Real Madrid were dealt a blow when Antonio Rudiger limped off in the first half, with their Champions League play-off tie against Manchester City less than a fortnight away. Vinicius Junior found the net with Madrid's only chance but it was ruled out after Mbappe was adjudged to have fouled his marker. Jofre Carreras had a low shot saved by Thibaut Courtois at the other end on a rare Espanyol attack. Madrid looked sharper at the start of the second half and Espanyol stopper Joan Garcia saved from Jude Bellingham and then Mbappe struck the post from a tight angle. Los Blancos were furious when Romero was only booked for a cynical slide tackle from behind to hack down Mbappe as he broke over the halfway line. — Agencies

Beyonce makes history at 2025 Grammy

The star's victory comes 25 years after her first Grammy nomination, as part of the R&B group Destiny's Child

WEB DESK

LOS ANGELES: Correcting what was widely seen as an historic wrong, Beyoncé won best album at the 67th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. The star was recognised for her eighth album, Cowboy Carter, which celebrates and contextualises the black roots of country music. She had previously been passed over for the ceremony's main prize on four separate occasions. As her name was read out, Beyoncé hugged her daughter Blue Ivy, then her husband Jay-Z, before walking to the stage in a gold paisley dress to accept the trophy. "I just feel very full and very honoured," she said. "It's been many, many years." The singer dedicated her award to Linda Martell, one of the pioneers for black musicians in country music and the first black woman to perform solo at the Grand Ole Opry (Ms Martell features on several of Cowboy Carter's songs). "I hope we just keep pushing forward [and] opening doors," Beyoncé continued. "God bless y'all. Thank you so much." The star's victory comes 25 years after her first Grammy nomination, as part of the R&B group Destiny's Child. She went on to become the most-awarded artist in Grammys history, with a haul of 35 trophies - but the main prize eluded her until Sunday night. In the end, it took a switch of genre to earn the Texas-born musician a win. Focusing on country and Americana, Cowboy Carter is the second part of a trilogy of albums that interrogates American musical traditions and uncovers the often

unheralded contributions made by black artists. Notably, it makes Beyoncé the first black woman to win album of the year since 1999, when Lauryn Hill's The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill took the title. Earlier in the evening, Cowboy Carter also won the Grammy for best country album - to Beyoncé's evident surprise. A stunned expression shot across the 43-year-old's face as her name was read out. In a moment laced with symbolism, that announcement

came from Taylor Swift - another artist who successfully switched genres, and who previously beat Beyoncé to the album of the year prize in 2010. "Wow, I really was not expecting this," said Beyoncé in her acceptance speech, thanking "all of the incredible country artists" who had voted for the prize. The recognition came five months after she was snubbed at the Country Music Awards - even after she became the first black woman to have a number one hit on

the Hot Country Songs chart, with Texas Hold 'Em. That song was also nominated for record of the year at the Grammys, but lost to Kendrick Lamar's Not Like Us. The rap hit, which was the knock-out blow in Lamar's long-running rap battle with Drake, scooped all five of the awards it was nominated for, including song of the year, best rap song and best music video. It was only the second hip-hop song win record of the year (following Childish Gambino's This Is America in 2019) but Lamar played the achievement down, focusing instead on his hometown of Los Angeles, which was recently ravaged by wildfires. "We're gonna dedicate this one to the city," he said. "Compton, Long Beach Inglewood, Hollywood, out to the valley... This is my neck of the woods that held me down since a young pup." The impact of the wildfires was the main theme of the ceremony, which doubled up as a fund-raiser, raising more than \$7 million (£5.7 million) for those affected. Comedian Trevor Noah, who hosted the ceremony, admitted that "just a few weeks ago, we weren't sure that this show would even happen". "Thankfully, due to the heroic efforts of firefighters, the fires have now been contained, and despite all the devastation, the spirit of the city has emerged," he added, to generous applause. Squads of firefighters were invited to the awards to honour their efforts; and they walked the red carpet taking selfies with the biggest stars in music. The show opened with a special performance by the local band Dawes, whose homes were destroyed in the inferno, playing Randy Newman's classic song I Love LA.



Briefs

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,510 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, gaining 1,510.72 points, a positive change of 1.32 percent, closing at 112,745.01 points as compared to 114,255.73 points on the last trading day. Pakistani cuisine recipes A total of 401,456,556 shares were traded during the day as compared to 543,124,378 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs20.351 billion against Rs. 27.973 billion on the last trading day. As many as 450 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 137 of them recorded gains and 262 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 51 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 26,261,284 shares at Rs 1.63 per share, Bank of Punjab with 24,695,262 shares at Rs.10.23 per share and Ghani Chemical with 22,003,898 shares at Rs.20.03 per share. —APP

Gold price ups by Rs200 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.200 and was sold at Rs 292,400 on Monday against its sale at Rs 292,200 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.171 to Rs.250,685 from Rs. 250,514 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs.229,802 from Rs. 229,646. The prices of per tola silver decreased by Rs.5 to Rs3,265 whereas that of ten gram silver came down by Rs4 to Rs2,799. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$2 to \$2,799 from \$2,797, the Association reported. —APP

Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.04 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.94. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.60 and Rs 281.10, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 5.17 to close at Rs285.04 against the last day's closing of Rs290.21, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.79, whereas a decrease of Rs. 4.08 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs342.76 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs346.84. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 paise each to close at Rs 75.97 and Rs74.39 respectively. —APP

Pak-China institute & CVF-V20 join forces to boost climate resilience

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark move to combat climate change and strengthen regional cooperation, the Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) and the Climate Vulnerable Forum - Vulnerable Twenty (CVF-V20) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to drive climate resilience, sustainable development, and environmental governance in Pakistan and beyond. The partnership aims to harness the expertise of both organizations to tackle climate challenges, promote sustainable economic growth, and support Pakistan's forthcoming Climate Prosperity Plan. The agreement underscores a shared commitment to research, policy advocacy, international climate finance, innovation, and capacity-building initiatives. —APP

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia SAIs vow to foster deeper coop

"This collaboration marks a significant step toward fostering international cooperation in auditing. The exchange of ideas and methodologies will undoubtedly strengthen our capacity to meet emerging challenges and set new benchmarks for public accountability," said Auditor-General of Pakistan, Ajmal Gondal while speaking on the occasion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Office of the Auditor-General of Pakistan and General Court of Audit (GCA) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia successfully concluded bilateral meeting here Monday, focusing on fostering closer ties between the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), sharing innovative audit methodologies, and planning collaborative initiatives for the future. According to press release, the GCA high-level delegation that participated in the discussion was led by its President, Dr. Hussam Bin Abdulmohsen Alangari. During the meeting, both institutions reaffirmed their shared commitment to promoting transparency, accountability, and excellence in public sector auditing. They also agreed to share best practices in audit standards, performance audits, and Citizen Participatory Audits and expand expertise in thematic, IT/IS, and environmental and impact audits. It was also agreed to collaborate on training programs, exchange trainers, address emerging auditing challenges, and plan cooperative audits, including a performance audit on the oil and gas sector in 2025. "This collaboration marks



a significant step toward fostering international cooperation in auditing. The exchange of ideas and methodologies will undoubtedly strengthen our capacity to meet emerging challenges and set new benchmarks for public ac-

countability," said Auditor-General of Pakistan, Ajmal Gondal while speaking on the occasion. On the occasion, Dr. Hussam Bin Abdulmohsen Alangari praised Pakistan's initiatives in modernizing audit practices and expressed his

enthusiasm for future collaborations. "The partnership between our two SAIs is a testament to the shared vision of accountability and transparency. We are eager to build upon this momentum and address challenges collectively, ensuring value addition to public sector auditing globally," he added. The meeting underscored the importance of international collaboration to address emerging challenges and leverage innovative technologies in auditing. The discussions also highlighted support for Pakistan's Audit Management Information System (AMIS) and enhanced coordination on global audit platforms. This successful engagement marks the beginning of a strengthened partnership between the SAIs of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, paving the way for deeper cooperation and knowledge-sharing to uphold public accountability and governance standards. During the meeting, the Saudi delegation informed that they offer a 2-week internship, which is scheduled for mid-February at GCA for SAIs with whom they had signed MoUs. This initiative aims to strengthen capacity building and facilitate knowledge sharing. Similarly, the Saudi side also announced the launch of the second phase of the Fund for Improved SAI Performance (FISP), which is scheduled for mid-February. This fund can support Capacity Building and ICT Solutions. The Office of AGP was also offered to apply for the second phase of FISP, which provides funds up to \$40,000.

China's annual trade in services exceeds \$1t

DNA

BEIJING: China's annual trade in services exceeded 1 trillion U.S. dollars for the first time last year, demonstrating significant potential for further growth. China's services import and export value amounted to a record-high of 7.5 trillion yuan (about 1.05 trillion U.S. dollars) in 2024, expanding 14.4 percent year on year. Exports grew 18.2 percent year on year and imports grew 11.8 percent, according to the latest data from the Ministry of Commerce (MOC). Driven by the global trends of digitization, smart technology advancement and green development, China's trade in services grew in scale, its structure was optimized further and its international competitiveness was enhanced in 2024, said Li Jun,

a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the MOC. He noted that the comprehensive relaxation and optimization of China's visa-free transit policy has played a role in boosting inbound tourism over the last year, Global Times reported. The broadly welcomed new policy has sparked the rise of "China Travel," a popular hashtag on social media where many travelers share their experiences in China, with increasing numbers of international tourists being drawn by the country's cultural landmarks, nature and city walks. "China Travel" is booming rapidly, and this growth is expected to boost the country's services trade further, while helping to drive the global travel industry toward continued recovery and prosperity," Li said. China's digital cultural platforms and content have

been gaining significant traction overseas, Li said, noting the popularity of Chinese video game "Black Myth: Wukong," the distribution of high-quality Chinese films and TV dramas on overseas streaming platforms such as Netflix and YouTube, and the fact that Chinese internet literature is influencing an increasing number of international readers. The Chinese government released a guideline on promoting the high-quality development of trade in services through high-standard opening-up in August last year. The document offered robust policy support for the development of China's services trade, Li said, calling for more efforts to advance opening-up, innovation and international cooperation in the sector. Noting that China established a nationwide negative list management system for cross-border trade in services last year,

Li suggested that the level of institutional opening-up should be improved continuously, that the negative list should be shortened gradually as appropriate, and that high-standard international economic and trade rules should be aligned with actively. He urged launching the construction of national demonstration zones for the innovative development of trade in services as soon as possible. To facilitate innovation, Li called for the potential of industrial digitization and digital transformation to be unlocked, for support for the professional organizations offering services in finance, consulting, design and certification to enhance their ability to provide international services, and for the accelerated development of green services. Bilateral, multilateral and regional collaboration in digital trade and trade in services should be expanded, Li said.

New Syria leader faces territorial, governance hurdles

DAMASCUS: The ousting of Bashar Assad ended decades of iron-fisted rule, but despite power now resting in Ahmed Al-Sharaa's hands, Syria faces a fragile transition amid territorial and governance challenges. Military commanders appointed Sharaa interim president weeks after Islamist-led rebel forces overran Damascus. His nomination has been welcomed by key regional players Egypt, Qatar, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia. Syrians are "now fully dependant" on the intentions of the new authorities over the future of their country, said Damascus-based lawyer Ezzedine Al-Rayeg. "Will they really take the country toward democracy, human rights?" he asked. Sharaa led the Islamist Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham group, which spearheaded the rebel offensive that toppled Assad on December 8. The group and other factions have been dissolved, with fighters set to be integrated into a future national force. Sharaa has now traded his fatigues for a suit and a tie. In his first address as president Thursday, he vowed to "form a broad transitional government, representative of Syria's diversity" that will "build the institutions of a new Syria" and work toward "free and transparent elections." Sharaa had already been acting as the country's leader before Wednesday's appointment, which followed a closed-door meeting with faction leaders who backed the overthrow of Assad. Rayeg said he wished the presidential nomination had been made "in a more democratic, participatory way." Authorities have pledged to hold a national dialogue conference involving all Syrians, but have yet to set a date. "We thought that the national conference would see the creation (new) authorities and allow the election of a president — perhaps Sharaa, or someone else," Rayeg said. "But if we are realistic and pragmatic, (appointing Sharaa) was perhaps the only way forward," said Rayeg, who since Assad's fall has helped found an initiative on human rights and political participation. —APP

Uzbekistan, Malaysia strengthen bilateral ties across multiple sectors

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan is prioritizing stronger diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with Malaysia, as both nations mark the 33rd anniversary of their diplomatic relations with commitment to deepen bilateral cooperation by high-level visits, strategic agreements, and an expanding trade and investment partnership. Madina Arifpova, Chief Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan on Monday, highlighted that fostering friendly relations and enhancing multifaceted partnerships with Malaysia remains a key focus of Uzbekistan's foreign policy in Asia. Uzbekistan and Malaysia have maintained a steady diplomatic exchange through six high-level visits, reinforcing their commitment to intergovernmental dialogue. The establishment of parliamentary 'friendship groups' in 2020 significantly boosted inter-parliamentary cooperation, facilitating reciprocal visits by top legislative officials. Regular political consultations between the foreign ministries have further strengthened bilateral ties, with six rounds of discussions addressing key regional and global issues. Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister visited Malaysia twice in 2024, underscoring the importance of ongoing diplomatic engagements. Economic collaboration between the two countries has grown substantially, with bilateral trade turnover increasing 2.5 times since 2020. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan AKAMATSU Shuichi called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters. — DNA

South Africa rejects Trump's land 'confiscation' claim

JOHNSBURG: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Monday rejected assertions made by his US counterpart Donald Trump a day prior. Trump, without citing evidence, claimed that "certain classes of people" are being treated "very badly" in South Africa and that Ramaphosa's government was confiscating their property. As a result, Trump said the US would end all funding for the country. It appears that Trump's comments were referring to a law signed by Ramaphosa last month, which Trump claimed offered "nil compensation" for property seized by the government. Originally introduced as a bill in 2020, the law was intended as a mechanism to review the apartheid-era Expropriation Act of 1975 and align it with the current constitution. Trump leveled similar claims in 2018, saying white farmers were being run off

their land and killed. Speaking of South Africa's land reform policy, Ramaphosa said, "The South African government has not confiscated any land (...). The recently adopted Expropriation Act is not a confiscation instrument." The South African government says the bill does not allow it to arbitrarily expropriate land, adding that it must first seek to reach agreement with its owners. Writing on the social media platform X, Ramaphosa described the bill as a, "constitutionally mandated legal process that ensures public access to land in an equitable and just manner as guided by the constitution," adding, "We look forward to engaging with the Trump administration over our land reform policy and issues of bilateral interest." Three decades after the collapse of South Africa's racist apartheid government in 1994, land ownership remains a conten-

tious issue, with most farm property in the country still owned by whites. "Terrible things are happening in South Africa," Trump wrote on his Truth Social media account. "The leadership is doing some terrible things, horrible things. So that's under investigation right now." "It is a bad situation that the Radical Left Media doesn't want to so much as mention," the statement continued. "A massive Human Rights VIOLATION, at a minimum, is happening for all to see. The United States won't stand for it, we will act. Also, I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of this situation has been completed!" The thorny path toward redressing the historical injustices of the apartheid system has been opposed by many conservatives and right-wing commentators. Elon Musk, who grew up in apartheid South Africa and has amplified such voices, is

one of those calling out Ramaphosa. A key policy shaping member of Trump's inner circle, the world's richest man used his account on X — which he owns — to attack Ramaphosa's policies as "openly racist." Ramaphosa on Monday said, "the US remains a key strategic political and trade partner for South Africa." But, he added, beyond providing assistance for South Africa's PEPFAR anti-HIV/Aids initiative, "there is no other significant funding that is provided by the United States in South Africa." That aid funds 17% of the initiative according to the government in Pretoria. South Africa's currency, the rand, fell roughly 2% against the US dollar in the wake of Trump's comments, with South African stocks and its benchmark government bond taking a hit as well. South Africa has one of the largest HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis treatment programs in the world, with 5.5

million people receiving anti-retroviral treatment each month. DW South Africa correspondent Dianne Hawker says that while most medication is provided by the government, many clinics rely on funds from USAID and PEPFAR to pay for staffing costs. Some clinics, run by local NGOs and funded by USAID, also provide different types of prophylactic treatment such as PREP, which is not available in government clinics. Elon Musk on Sunday announced that his "Department of Government Efficiency" would shut down USAID, calling it "a criminal organization." On Monday he said the move had met approval from Donald Trump. In fiscal year 2023, USAID disbursed \$72 billion (70.2 billion) in global assistance for everything from women's health in conflict zones to access to clean water, HIV/AIDS treatments and anti-corruption work.

Tapal Tea's digital transformation with SAP sets new standards

ISLAMABAD: Tapal Tea, a leading FMCG brand in Pakistan, has successfully embarked on a comprehensive digital transformation journey by implementing SAP's state-of-the-art cloud solutions, aiming to drive operational excellence, strategic alignment, and future growth. The company, long committed to staying ahead of industry standards, has partnered with SAP to transition its entire business infrastructure to the cloud, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's FMCG sector. The transformation initiative encompasses SAP's S/4 HANA system on the cloud known as RISE with SAP, along with various modules including SuccessFactors for Human Resource Management, Arriba for sourcing, Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) with RFID integration, and SAP Analytics Cloud (SAC) for real-time business insights. This multi-year roadmap aligns with Tapal's strategic objective to enhance digital agility, improve decision-making, and streamline business processes across all departments. Tapal's digital transformation aligns with its ambitious Vision '26 — "Reliable, Sustainable and Scalable IT." —Agencies

Core inflation decelerates to 2.4 % in Jan

ISLAMABAD: The core inflation measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI) decelerated further to 2.4 percent during January 2025 as compared to 4.1 percent recorded during December 2024, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Monday. According to PBS data, the CPI based inflation during the same month of last year (January 2024) was recorded at 28.3%. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.2% in January 2025 as compared to 0.1% in the previous month and an increase of 1.8% in January 2024. According to PBS data, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation urban, decreased to 2.7% on year-on-year basis in January 2025 as compared to 4.4% in the previous month and 30.2% in January 2024. On month-on-month basis, it increased to 0.2% in January 2025 as compared to a negative change of 0.1% in the previous month and an increase of 1.8% in January 2024. CPI inflation rural, decreased to 1.9% on year-on-year basis in January 2025 as compared to 3.6% in the previous month and 25.7% in January 2024. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.2% in January 2025 as compared to 0.3% in the previous month and an increase of 1.9% in January 2024. —DNA

Taiwan, China need peace given 'multi-fold changes' internationally: Lai

TAIPEI: Taiwan and China need to talk to each other to achieve peace given the "multifold changes" in the international situation, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said on Monday, calling for dialogue instead of confrontation. Lai, who China detests as a "separatist," has repeatedly called for talks with Beijing, which has stepped up its military and political pressure against the democratically-governed island it sees as sovereign Chinese territory. But both China and Taiwan face pressure from the new administration of US President Donald Trump, who has imposed tariffs on China and threatened similar measures against imported semiconductors, a sector Taiwan dominates. Speaking in Taipei to members of the Taiwanese business community who have invested in China, Lai said Taiwan and China's common enemies were natural disasters and their common goal was the well-being of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. "Therefore, we should, especially at a time of multifold changes in the international situation, have a good dialogue and exchanges between the two sides of the Strait in order to achieve the goal of peace," he said. —Agencies

Briefs

Ramzan Sugar Mills case verdict on Feb 6

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A Lahore anti-corruption court on Monday reserved its verdict in Ramzan Sugar Mills reference filed against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shehbaz. The court is set to announce its decision on Feb 6 after both parties completed their arguments. The hearing was conducted by Accountability Judge Sardar Muhammad Iqbal Dogar. Defence lawyer Anjad Pervez argued that the construction of the drainage channel in question was not approved by then CM Shehbaz Sharif but by the Punjab cabinet for the betterment of the area. The defence lawyer further said the case against Shehbaz and Hamza was politically motivated. On the other hand, prosecutor Mian Waseem stated that, in his view, the construction of the sludge was justified. The prosecution further asserted that the drain was built on the request of the late MPA Rahmat Ali. The prosecution urged the court to make a decision on the acquittal request after reviewing the case records.

New Toshakhana case adjourned

COURT REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The hearing of the new Toshakhana case against PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi was adjourned until Feb 10. Special Judge Central Shahrukh Arjumand heard the case. During the hearing, PTI founder's counsel, Qausain Faisal Mufti, completed a cross-examination of two prosecution witnesses, Muhammad Faheem and Umar Siddique. Testimonies of eight witnesses have been recorded in the case, so far with cross-examination concluded for seven of them. The defense is scheduled to cross-examine the eighth witness during the next hearing. The PTI founder and Bushra Bibi were present in the courtroom, accompanied by family members, Barrister Gohar, and Faisal Chaudhry.

EU tariffs 'pretty soon' but UK can be worked out: Trump

US President also discussed his relationship with the British Prime Minister who he said has been "very nice". "We've had a couple of meetings. We've had numerous phone calls. We're getting along very well," he added

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has hinted the European Union (EU) could be next to face tariffs, after he slapped 25% levies on goods from Mexico and Canada along with an additional 10% tax on imports from China. While arriving into Maryland from Florida, Trump told the British media that tariffs on EU goods imported into the US could happen "pretty soon". "They don't take our cars, they don't take our farm products, they take almost nothing and we take everything from them. Millions of cars, tremendous amounts of food and farm products," he told journalists. The US President added he enjoyed good relations with British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, and that trade issues with the UK could be worked out.

When asked if there was a timeline for announcing tariffs on the EU, Trump said: "I wouldn't say there's a timeline, but it's going to be pretty soon." For its part, the 27-member bloc has condemned Trump's decision to move ahead with tariffs against Canada, Mexico and China, and warned that it will "respond firmly" if it also becomes a target. Mexico and Canada have vowed to take retaliatory measures, while China

EU leaders vow to fight back if Trump imposes tariffs

BRUSSELS: EU leaders have vowed unity against Trump's tariffs as they gather in Brussels to discuss defence and security issues. The European Union has responded with unity and conviction after US President Donald Trump announced on Sunday that import tariffs on the European Union are "definitely happening". Speaking before an informal meeting to discuss security issues, European leaders appeared to agree that the EU will fight US tariffs, if they were to be applied. German chancellor Olaf Scholz said the bloc "can react to tariff policies with tariff policies". "We must and will do that, but the perspective and aim should be that we proceed in such a way so that things come down to cooperation," the leader of Europe's largest economy added. Kaja Kallas, the EU's top diplomat in Brussels, has warned that there are "no winners in trade wars." "We are very interlinked," she said. "We need America, and America needs us as well." If the US and Europe started a trade war "then the one laughing on the side is China," she said. The US is the biggest source of EU imports after China, while the US is the largest market for EU exports, according to the European Commission. Kallas made the comments ahead of EU talks expected to focus on defence and on countering a growing threat from Russia. EU heads are also expected to discuss responses to US President Donald Trump's threats to impose tariffs on imports from the EU. "If we are attacked on trade issues, Europe ... would have to react," French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday as he arrived in Brussels for talks with EU leaders. He added that recent declarations from the United States are pushing Europe to be stronger and more united. "What is happening ... pushes the EU to be more united and more active to respond to issues of collective security," Macron said. "We have to do everything to avoid this totally unnecessary and stupid tariff war," said Polish PM Donald Tusk, adding that "we cannot lose common sense, we cannot lose awareness of our interests. At the same time, we cannot lose our European self-respect and self-confidence. - Agencies

said it could take "corresponding counter measures". On trade with the UK, the US President said the country has been "out of line" but added that the issues could be resolved. "The UK is out of line. But I'm sure that one, I think that one, can be worked out," Trump said. The US President also discussed his relationship with the British Prime Minister who he said has been "very nice". "We've had a couple of meetings. We've had numerous phone calls. We're getting along very well," he added. Tariffs are taxes charged on goods imported from other countries. The charges are seen as a tool to protect domestic industries from foreign competition. Increasing the price of imported goods is aimed at encouraging consumers to buy cheaper domestic products instead to help boost their own economy's growth. Most tariffs are set as a percentage of the value of the goods and in general the importer pays it. But given countries often respond to tariffs by matching measures of their own, businesses and consumers in both countries can be impacted. Trump is threatening to impose tariffs on goods imported from the EU to the US to address his country's long-standing trade deficit with the bloc, which occurs when a country imports more than it exports.

Pakistan target of planned conspiracy

DNA

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said on Monday the country had been a target of a conspiracy. He headed a high-profile session in Quetta in which security situation of the province came under discussion. Also, the meeting expressed serious concerns over the recent layer of terrorism which claimed lives of civilians as well as security personnel.

In the meeting, the CM said the Kalat incident was deeply disturbing and that the government equally shared the pain of the victims families.

He also spoke about the importance of dialogue to solve the problems that have engulfed the province for many days. Bugti said the writ of state would be maintained at any cost as without it, there would be terrible repercussions. The chief minister said that for the first time in history, the teachers as well as medical fraternity were recruited on merit and people had expressed trust on them.

He said the country had been a target of a conspiracy and that the state would have to be proactive in dealing with any unforeseen activity. He said the youth had been brainwashed through social media.

Syria car bomb explosion kills 15

ALEPPO: A car bomb went off on a main road on the outskirts of the northern city of Manbij, Syria's civil defense said. Most of those killed were women, while over a dozen others were injured. A car explosion in northern Syria on Monday has killed at least 15 people, authorities said.

The blast took place on a main road on the outskirts of Syria's northern city Manbij, the civil defense said. Fourteen women and one man were killed, and fifteen other women were injured. Since the lightning rebellion which toppled the rule of Bashar Assad in December, Manbij has been the scene of fighting between the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Turkish-backed fighters.

Most of those killed were women farm workers who were being transported in a vehicle next to the exploding car, state news agency SANA reported, citing the civil defense, also known as the White Helmets. It added that the death toll was likely to climb. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. The explosion is the second in three days. On Saturday, four civilians were killed and nine more were injured in another car bomb attack in Manbij. Mumir Mustafa, the deputy director of the White Helmets, said Monday's car bomb explosion was the seventh in Manbij in just over a month. - Agencies

Pakistan calls for comprehensive reforms in ECO at Tehran summit

Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch Advocates for ECO Trade Agreement Implementation



DNA

TEHRAN: The Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Ms. Anna Baloch represented Pakistan in the High-Level Committee (HLC) on Economic Cooperation Organization Reforms and the Prospects of Cooperation in the Region held on 3 February 2025 in Tehran, Iran. At the HLC, the Foreign Secretary

presented Pakistan's perspectives on key matters related ECO reforms. The Foreign Secretary stated that ECO needs comprehensive reforms, including financial and budgetary matters, enhancing efficiency of the secretariat, effective recruitment policy, and deliberation on other related matters. Being the founding member of the organization, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional connectivity and trade. The Foreign Secretary asserted that Pakistan attaches great importance to ECO Trade Agreement's (ECOTA) early implementation and also would urge all Member States to take a broader and more holistic view of the matter and in the earliest implementation of ECOTA. The Foreign Secretary further highlighted the importance of ECO Vision 2025 in terms of increasing intra-regional

trade and regional connectivity and also appreciated the Uzbekistan's proposed Strategic Objectives of Cooperation- 2035.

The Foreign Secretary expressed that with collective and coordinated efforts from the platform of ECO, all member states can realize the true potential of the ECO in the region. Meanwhile, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Rasoul Mohajer has called for more efforts among the members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to increase exchanges. He said the volume of economic exchanges among the ECO members with the countries around the world stands at one trillion dollars. "However, only seven percent of this figure includes interactions among the ECO members, which needs to be improved," the Iranian diplomat added. During the session, Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Alibek Bakayev, whose country currently assumes the role of ECO secretary general, also delivered a speech. ECO, whose members are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan, promotes regional trade and economic development.

CEO of the Saudi Fund for Development calls on Aurangzeb

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting today at the Finance Division with H.E. Sultan Abdulrahman A. AlMarshad, CEO of the Saudi Fund for Development, who called on the Finance Minister to discuss various aspects of Pakistan-Saudi economic relations. During the meeting, Senator Aurangzeb shared updates on Pakistan's macroeconomic stability, highlighting improvements in key economic indicators. He expressed his gratitude for the long-standing partnership between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the importance of Saudi Ara-

bia's continued support in funding and investment, which has significantly contributed to Pakistan's economic growth. Senator Aurangzeb also recalled his recent meeting with Saudi Minister of Finance, Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaani, in Davos, and his extending an invitation to Pakistan to attend the first edition of the high-level annual conference on challenges and opportunities facing emerging market economies, which is being jointly organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, on February 16-17, 2025. The Finance Minister expressed his anticipation for the conference, noting the valuable insights he hoped to gain from the event and the leadership of Saudi Arabia in implementing Vision 2030.

Aleema Khan claimed the 26th Amendment was meant to appoint judges favoring the government

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Aleema Khan, sister of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan, has claimed that judges are being appointed to the judiciary with the sole purpose of keeping Imran Khan in jail. Speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail, she conveyed Imran Khan's message, stating that recent developments clearly indicate a deliberate effort to imprison the PTI founder and dismantle the party. Aleema Khan asserted that for the past three years, various plots have been orchestrated with the primary objective of ensuring that Imran Khan remains imprisoned and that PTI is eliminated. "His government was overthrown, people were subjected to oppression, and the May 9 incident was staged as a false flag operation. Over 100,000 raids were conducted on homes. On February 8, people's votes were stolen, and corrupt individuals were placed in the assembly," she alleged. She also pointed to the 26th Amendment, claiming it was introduced to bring in judges who would serve the

Judges appointed to keep Imran Khan imprisoned: Aleema

government's interests. "Our judiciary has capable judges who can deliver justice, but they need those who will hand out sentences and keep Imran Khan in jail," she said. Aleema further referred to the £190 million case ruling, claiming that it was decided to ensure that high court judges uphold the conviction during the appeal process, dragging the legal proceedings for another two to three years. She alleged that Supreme Court judges were now strategically appointed to ensure Imran Khan remained in jail. Additionally, she criticised the Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), stating that it was introduced to suppress social media. "A law has been enacted today that allows authorities to imprison anyone who speaks out on social media," she remarked. She concluded by stating that the rule of law has been severely compromised, leaving little hope for justice through the courts.

Gaza death toll rises to 62,000 as thousands of missing declared dead

"More than 6,000 Palestinians were detained by the Israeli forces and dozens of them were tortured to death in detention," he added

FOREIGN DESK

Gaza city: The government media office in the Gaza Strip has raised to 61,709 the death toll from Israel's genocidal war on the besieged territory. Salama Marouf, the media office's head, released the figure on Sunday by adding 14,222 who are missing and now presumed dead to 47,487 bodies that were already transferred to hospitals. Speaking to reporters at Gaza City's al-Shifa hospital, he said the victims included 17,881 children, among them 214 newborn babies. He also noted that over 38,000 Palestinian children were orphaned by the Israeli offensive against Gaza. "More than 6,000 Palestinians were detained by the Israeli forces and dozens of them were tortured to death in detention," he added. "Over 2 million Palestinians were forcibly displaced, with many forced to relocate more than 25 times amid absence of es-

sential services." Meanwhile, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned that the needs in Gaza are "immense." "Any hope of recovery will require a full-scale humanitarian response with all agencies coming together," it said in an X post. As displaced families make their way back to North Gaza, WFP is setting up more distribution points to provide food where it's needed most. The needs in Gaza are immense. Any hope of recovery will require a full-scale humanitarian response with all agencies coming together. This means 8% of the population of Gaza were direct victims of the genocidal campaign. Israel committed over 9,260 massacres against families, including more than 2,090 families that were entirely wiped out from the civil registry. The regime killed at least 4,880 families, leaving only one member in each. More than 17,880 children were among the martyrs, including 214 infants who were born and killed during the aggression.

JAN/FEB 2025

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