



# Islamabad POST

Friday, February 07, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**Ex-Brazil, Madrid legend Marcelo retires aged 36**

Detailed News On Page-06

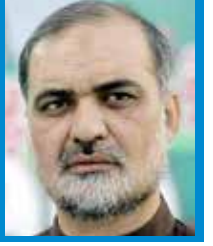
**Saudi prince condemns Trump's plan**

Detailed News On Page-08



**JI to observe black day on February 08**

Detailed News On Page-08



## White House bows to pressure

# Pakistan shrugs off US proposal to expel Gazans

Any attempts to displace the Palestinians from their land as well as to continue illegal settlements would be a blatant violation of the international law, and undermine the peace and security of the entire region

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The proposal to displace the people of Gaza is deeply troubling and unjust. The Palestinian land belongs to the Palestinian people and the only viable and just option is the two-state solution, in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions, said Spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, during a presser on Thursday.

Ambassador Shafiq further said, Pakistan has been and will continue to stand by the people of Palestine in their just struggle for self-determination, as well as for the establishment of a sovereign, independent, and contiguous Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. He added, any attempts to displace the Palestinians from their land as well as to continue illegal settlements would be a blatant violation of the international law, and undermine the peace and security of the entire region.

He reiterated call for the return of all displaced Palestinians to their homes, including in Gaza; complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories, upscaling of the humanitarian assistance and end to all obstructions, as well as concerted international efforts for the early reconstruction of Gaza. Meanwhile, the White bowed to immense pressure emanating from across the globe condemning the US president statement. The White House spokesperson said that the US President only wanted a short-term exit of the Gazans, at least till the time the reconstruction process completes.

## Two human traffickers arrested

FIA revealed the suspects extorted millions from victims with false promises of travel and employment abroad

STAFF REPORT

GUJRANWALA: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala has arrested two individuals, including a man suspected of involvement in the Greece boat tragedy, as part of its ongoing crackdown against human trafficking networks. According to the FIA, the arrested individuals have been identified as AnsarMehmood and Muhammad Owais. Mehmood was apprehended in Narowal, while Owais was taken into custody in Gujranwala. Authorities confirmed that Mehmood was directly linked to the Greece boat incident, which resulted in the loss of several lives. The FIA stated that the suspects were part of an organised human trafficking gang that had already seen several of its members arrested. Investigators revealed that Mehmood and his accomplices had extorted Rs 4.5 million from a victim, Ahsan Ali, promising to facilitate his journey to Europe.

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### PM, son acquitted in Ramzan Mills case

Anti-corruption court accepts father-son duo's acquittal pleas in case related to Rs 213 million loss to national kitty

### COURT REPORTER

LAHORE: An anti-corruption court in Lahore on Thursday acquitted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shahbaz in the Ramzan Sugar Mills case. Anti-Corruption Court Judge Sardar Iqbal Dogar announced the verdict, which was reserved on Monday. The said case pertains to allegations accusing PM Shehbaz, then-Punjab chief minister, of misuse of authority by utilising public funds for the construction of a sludge carrier to facilitate the Ramzan Sugar Mills, owned by his sons. NAB, in its reference filed on February 18, 2019 had accused PM Shehbaz of getting a 10-kilometre sludge carrier constructed in district Chiniot.

### Maldives defence chief meets CJCS

Appreciates the high professional standards of Pakistan Armed Forces

### DNA

RAWALPINDI: Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of Defence Staff, Maldives, who is on an official visit to Pakistan, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters Rawalpindi. The meeting underscored the need to strengthen defense ties, with both sides reaffirming commitment to broaden & expand existing collaboration, including military engagements and joint initiatives.

## After taking Centre on board KP to send jirga to Kabul: CM Gandapur

"Peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan is interlinked," says Barrister Saif

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur announced on Thursday that a Jirga would be sent to Afghanistan, after taking the federal government into confidence, to address the increasing incidents of terrorism in the province. Talking to Geo News, CM Gandapur said KP was affected by Afghanistan, a country that had been a victim of wars for decades. KP and Afghanistan share a border of more than 2,600 kilometres long. With authorities in Kabul are reluctant to take decisive action against terrorists' sanctuaries, militants from across the border have repeatedly targeted Pakistan's security forces and innocent civilians. Recently, the son of the deputy governor of Afghanistan's Badghis province was among four terrorists killed in KP. CM Gandapur said today that they would form a Jirga, comprising representatives of different tribes, to hold talks with

Continued on Page 06

## Waqas decries crackdown on party workers

Following founder's directives, we would observe February 8 as black day: PTI's info secretary

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central information secretary Sheikh WaqasAkram decried the ongoing crackdown on the party workers, stating that raids were being conducted at the residences of its MNAs and MPAs. Despite such measures, he asserted, the public will take to the streets on Feb 8. Addressing a press conference, Akram announced

Continued on Page 06

## J. Shah stresses urgent need for climate justice

Floods have caused Pakistan a loss of Rs 30 billion, making it one of the most climate-affected countries

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, the Supreme Court's most senior judge, has emphasised that the world is facing severe climate challenges, making environmental justice a crucial necessity. Speaking at an international conference on climate change in Islamabad, he stated that he would present the judiciary's stance on climate justice. "Floods have caused Pakistan a loss of Rs30 billion, making it one of the most climate-affected countries. Natural disasters have significantly impacted the nation." Justice Shah pointed out that rapidly melting glaciers were affecting the Indus River system, posing threats to agriculture and farmers. He stressed the need for understanding climate science and finding homegrown solutions, including the establishment of a climate court. He further called for an immediate response to environmental issues and a system for climate accountability to

Continued on Page 06

## Qureshi emphasises 'national consensus'

Incarcerated PTI leader urges political parties to agree on "independent and autonomous" ECP

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated PTI leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi stressed on Thursday the need for "national consensus" for carrying out reforms in the country, saying that no individual alone can deal with the challenges. "At the moment, we need a national agenda and consensus on

Continued on Page 06

## NATIONAL DAY OF IRAN



ISLAMABAD: Iran's Ambassador, Reza Amiri Moghaddam, along with Federal minister for planning, Ahsan Iqbal, and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, participate in a cake-cutting ceremony marking the 46th anniversary of the Iranian revolution. - DNA

## Envoy for strengthening Iran-Pak ties

Iranian Envoy recalls high-level diplomatic exchanges between Tehran and Islamabad

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza AmiriMoghaddam, reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to strengthening relations with Pakistan during a ceremony marking the 46th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution. The event, arranged by the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad, was attended by distinguished guests, including Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who graced the occasion as Chief Guest. In his address, Ambassador Moghaddam highlighted the profound impact of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, describing it

Continued on Page 06

## President Zardari, Chinese Premier Pak, China agree to strengthen anti-terror coop

President Zardari reiterated Pakistan's resolve to further enhance the relationship, with a focus on regional connectivity and economic growth

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Pakistan and China have agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in multiple sectors including counter-terrorism, defence, agriculture, information technology and others, reiterating that the attempt to undermine or disrupt bilateral ties were bound to fail. The bilateral ties and cooperation were discussed as President Asif Ali Zardari, during his ongoing five-day state visit to China, met with President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji,

Continued on Page 06

## 3 cops martyred, 6 injured in Karak check post attack

Unknown terrorists opened fire from all sides at a checkpoint in Karak's Bahadur Khel area

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Three cops were martyred while another six were injured in an attack on a police checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district late last

Continued on Page 06

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## Rang-e-Pakistan to showcase rich heritage

ISLAMABAD: The highly anticipated "Rang-e-Pakistan 2025" cultural festival is set to take place in the federal capital with the joint efforts of Lok Virsa and Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) from February 21-23. The three-day festival aims to celebrate Pakistan's diverse culture, art, and heritage through a series of vibrant performances and exhibitions. Organized in collaboration with various cultural institutions, the event will feature musical performances, Qawwali, Mushaira, dance shows, and instrumental performances. The visitors can also enjoy screenings of cultural documentaries, historical paintings, book exhibitions, and calligraphy demonstrations.

In addition to the artistic displays, the festival will host puppet shows for children, an exhibition of antiquities and replicas, and traditional food stalls representing the rich culinary traditions from all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The festival is expected to attract a large audience, including culture enthusiasts, artists, and tourists, as it provides an opportunity to experience the essence of Pakistan's artistic and literary heritage.—APP

## Rs 5b Mohmand Dam under construction, KP to be Green Province: CM

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (CMKP) Ali Amin Gandapur on Thursday said the construction of the Mohmand Dam project is underway at a cost of Rs 5 billion. Speaking at the "Breath Conference" on climate change here, the CM emphasized that the province plays a crucial role in environmental conservation, stating, "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cleans 15% of Pakistan's carbon emissions, and provinces should be given their fair share." He further highlighted that KP is the only province actively contributing to reducing carbon emissions at a significant level.—APP

## Billion Tree Plus plantation drive discussed

DIR LOWER: In compliance with the directives of the provincial government, Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower, Muhammad Arif Khan, instructed Additional Deputy Commissioner General, Bashir Khan, to hold a meeting with all stakeholders regarding the Government Green Growth Strategy - Billion Tree Plus Plantation Drive. During the meeting, Divisional Forest Officer, Shabir Jan, gave a detailed briefing on the plantation campaign. He highlighted the importance of trees in combating climate change and outlined plans for the Forest Department to organize public awareness events across the district on the significance of afforestation and the impact of global warming.—APP

# Political will, Policy continuity, strategic enablers of blue economy

Vice Admiral (Retd) Iftikhar Rao briefed on the National Maritime Policy (NMP) 2025, highlighting recently endorsed structural, operational, and strategic reforms proposed by the Task Force on Revamping Pakistan's Maritime Sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's blue economy holds transformative potential as a strategic economic driver. However, unlocking it hinges on key enablers, i.e., political backing, policy continuity, and institutional coordination, along with overcoming bureaucratic inertia, policy stagnation, and infrastructure gaps. This needs a proactive approach focused on strengthening governance and fostering synergies.

This was observed during a roundtable discussion titled "Navigating Pakistan's Blue Economy: Strategic Insights and Future Roadmap," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad.

The session was addressed as guest of honor by Vice Admiral (r) Iftikhar Ahmed Rao, former SAPM maritime affairs, and as keynote speaker by Cdre (r) Muhammad Jawad Akhtar, former advisor maritime affairs, Planning Commission, Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Dr Usman Chohan, advisor, Center for Aerospace and Strategic Studies (CASS), Prof Dr Azhar Ahmad, senior analyst, Muhammad Wasim Khan, former DG, Marine Fisheries Department, and Cdre (r) Muhammad Obaidullah, maritime and defense analyst. Vice Admiral (r) Iftikhar Rao briefed on the National Maritime Policy (NMP) 2025, highlighting recently endorsed structural, operational, and strategic reforms proposed by the Task Force on Revamp-



ing Pakistan's Maritime Sector. He emphasized that Pakistan's maritime future hinges on the effective implementation of the reforms and welcomed the growing awareness of maritime and blue economy discourse, stressing its importance for national economic resilience. Cdre (r) Jawad Akhtar delivered a detailed presentation on NMP 2025 and stressed that to drive maritime transformation, the targets must include enhancing the capacity of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and FBR, aligning policies with actionable directives, increasing transit trade and transshipment vol-

umes, third-party audits, and reviving Panni Harbor. However, he warned that delays in approvals, technological and infrastructure gaps, resistance to privatization, capacity constraints, geopolitical trade barriers, and sustainability concerns remain major hurdles. He said the NMP 2025 task force must continue monitoring progress and addressing bottlenecks efficiently to ensure successful implementation. Moreover, a phased approach to major reforms will help manage risks while securing early successes to build momentum. He stressed that the task force should engage

with international port operators for knowledge transfer and technological integration, collaborate with labor unions to ensure fair labor practices in privatization, and strengthen the maritime linkages within URAAN Pakistan. These are essential practices for sustaining long-term growth and competitiveness in the sector. Cdre (r) Obaidullah criticized the imposition of a 33% tax on the maritime sector in 2023, arguing that it reduces Pakistan's competitiveness in the global market, especially when tax-free incentives were in place in the 2001 policy. A major hurdle in maritime policy

implementation is a lack of political will, said Cdre (r) Obaidullah. He noted that none of the major political parties prioritize maritime affairs in their manifestos. Without political backing, there would be policy stagnation, and a cycle of forming task forces would continue without meaningful action. Endorsing this, Dr Azhar Ahmad highlighted the need for a shift in policymaking mindset and culture. To transform the blue economy into a tangible economic driver, a forward-looking approach to long-term policy sustainability, inclusion of dedicated experts and intelligentsia, building institutional memory, developing synergy among various maritime authorities, and policy follow-up mechanisms must be ensured. Wasim Khan said the NMP 2025 appears to be a mere rewording of the 2001 policy rather than a comprehensive overhaul. He stressed that Pakistan's fisheries sector requires urgent technological investment and structured governance mechanisms to boost aquaculture exports and sustainability. The challenges of the maritime sector are fundamentally rooted in bureaucratic inertia and outdated colonial-era structures, said Dr Usman Chohan. He argued that many inefficiencies persist by design, favoring status quo interests over modernization and empowerment of new-generation professionals. However, he noted that the discourse around the blue economy has significantly evolved, creating a window of opportunity for institutional reform.

## PTI founder's letter discarded as trash: Azma

LAHORE Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that a letter, written by the PTI founder, has been discarded like trash by its recipient. She said that in the name of a letter, the so-called leader had requested for an NRO. "The person who once claimed to stand his ground and never back down, is now groveling," she added. She said reports suggested that the PTI founder was suffering from high blood pressure and nerve-related issues. "The man who once preached about real freedom is now under severe mental stress," she added. She said that a certain group would continue to burn with jealousy over successes of Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz. "The walls of prison have diminished the PTI founder's ability to think and understand," she added. Azma remarked that the PTI founder had played all his cards to get out of jail. "Now, the only card left for him is to apologise in shame," she added.—APP

## Successful free kidney transplant performed at Jinnah Hospital

LAHORE: A successful kidney transplant operation was performed at the Jinnah Hospital Lahore on Thursday, marking another milestone in the province's healthcare sector. Following the procedure, Transplant Surgeon and Head of Department Professor Naveed Iqbal informed the media that 24-year-old Muhammad Umair, an MBBS doctor, donated his kidney to his sister Umm-e-Habiba. Both the donor and the recipient are reported to be in good health post-surgery. The Principal of Allama Iqbal Medical College, Professor Asghar Naqi, and MS Jinnah Hospital, Dr. Kashif Jahangir, visited the transplant unit to oversee the procedure. Professor Naveed Iqbal highlighted that the kidney transplant was performed free of cost in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He credited the success of the procedure to the full support of Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, Chairman Board of Governors Gohar Ejaz, as well as the hospital administration.—APP

## Pak seeks Germany's tech help to advance climate action plan

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khursid Alam has sought technical support of Germany in developing Pakistan's climate action plans and accelerating the transition to clean energy sources. Talking to a 3-member delegation from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led by Ms. Christiane Amari, Ms. Romina underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation on climate change and sustainable development. The discussions centered on ongoing and future initiatives aimed at environmental protection, climate adaptation, and mitigation efforts, with a special focus on finding innovative solutions to combat the adverse impacts of climate change in Pakistan. The country has been severely affected by floods, droughts, and other climate-related challenges in recent years. PM's aide highlighted the significance of international collaboration in addressing climate change, particularly for countries like Pakistan, which face unique vulnerabilities due

to their geographical and socio-economic factors. She reaffirmed the Pakistani government's commitment to tackling these challenges through the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy and the Pakistan Climate Change Act. Pakistan is also focused on meeting its climate goals outlined in the Paris Agreement. Ms. Amari assured supporting Pakistan in its climate objectives, commending the country's proactive approach to environmental protection. She emphasized the crucial role of cooperation between the two nations to address the growing climate crisis and advocated for the exchange of knowledge, technology, and financial resources. "Integrating climate change adaptation into national development policies is paramount," Ms. Amari said. "We must ensure that the transition to a green economy is inclusive and resilient." Romina Khursid also emphasized the need for increased financing and capacity-building support for local communities, who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The discussion also touched on poten-

tial new partnerships in areas such as water management, clean energy, carbon reduction, protection of melting glaciers, and global climate risk financing. Both parties expressed optimism about the collaborative efforts to meet global climate targets, while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of those most affected by climate change. They committed to continuing to explore additional avenues of support to enhance Pakistan's climate resilience and sustainability. The Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Climate Change, Ahmed Atteeq Anwar also joined the meeting and highlighted the importance of educating and engaging the younger generation in climate awareness. He suggested that schools integrate climate change topics into their curricula and encouraged activities such as tree planting and community cleanups to foster environmental responsibility. "Media and social platforms have a crucial role to play in spreading awareness and inspiring youth to take climate action," Anwar added.—APP

## CTO stresses for people-friendly policing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO), Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider, on Thursday reaffirmed the commitment of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) to professionalism, uniform law enforcement, and citizen convenience. A police spokesperson told APP that CTO Zeeshan listened to the problems faced by the police officers and issued orders to the officers concerned to resolve them. Addressing the police officers at the Traffic Police Headquarters, CTO said that ensuring professionalism, uniform enforcement of the law, and good moral behavior toward citizens in the Islamabad Traffic Police are our top priorities. CTO Zeeshan urged all officers to adopt modern strategies

for the immediate resolution of problems faced by citizens and to improve traffic flow. All officers should ensure strict implementation of the principle of "first greeting, then speech" to promote the concept of people-friendly and civilized policing. Zeeshan issued orders to establish an "Accident Response Unit" to provide immediate assistance to citizens in case of accidents. He instructed the officers to make the process of educating citizens about traffic rules more effective under the "Education on Wheels" initiative. The CTO Zeeshan also announced awards for the officers who performed the best. He said that every month, police officers who perform their duties efficiently and demonstrate outstanding service will be awarded certificates of appreciation and awards.



RAWALPINDI: Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of Defence Staff, Maldives called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters.

## Kundi urges religious institutions to contribute to harmony

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Thursday emphasized the important role of seminaries in promoting peace and fostering a positive image of Pakistan. During his visit to Jamia Imdadul Uloom Darwesh Masjid Peshawar, he highlighted the significance of religious institutions in contributing to national unity and development, urging them to continue their efforts in building a peaceful and tolerant society. Governor on this occasion reviewed the examination center for Wifaqul Madaris. Provincial Administrator of Wifaqul Madaris Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Maulana Hussain Ahmad,

spokesperson Siraj ul Haq and others briefed the Governor about the examination system of Wifaqul Madaris. Speaking at the occasion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed his pleasure at the event and remarked, "It gives me immense joy to see you all working practically for peace, tolerance, and the soft image of Pakistan. You will be ambassadors of religion and the country. May Allah grant you success, so we can work together for the development and peace of the nation." He was informed that this year, 42,000 students from across the country would graduate from Wifaqul Madaris, including 30,000 women, which he termed

as very encouraging. He praised the disciplined conduct of the exams, calling it commendable. He also acknowledged the efforts of the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs for playing a role in supporting religious institutions. The Provincial Administrator of Wifaqul Madaris further informed the Governor that 47,000 students from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are appearing for various levels of exams under Wifaqul Madaris, with the final paper taking place that day. The Governor congratulated the students for their dedication. Meanwhile, a delegation of female students from Roots Millennium College, led by Lina Za-






hour, met with the Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House. The meeting focused on the state of education in the country, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, discussing various aspects of the educational system and related issues. During the discussion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized the importance of women's education for the development of the new generation and the prosperity of the country. He said, "Education for women is crucial for the progress of our nation. Beyond public sector jobs, we must focus on modern, relevant education. Our province's youth are

highly talented, and it is essential to encourage young girls, as an educated girl can play a vital role in shaping the future." He further said that his vision and efforts are directed towards connecting the province's educational institutions with international standards, ensuring that even underprivileged children receive global-quality education at their doorstep. He also expressed his desire to make it easier for students to pursue higher education abroad if needed. The students praised Governor Faisal Karim Kundi for his role in promoting women's empowerment and youth engagement in the province.—DNA

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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/ DPR 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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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

<b>Water Tank</b>
Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Ahsan spells out priorities to tackle climate challenges

“Around 80% of Pakistan’s water sources are unsafe for consumption, contributing to 100,000 child deaths annually from waterborne diseases. This has direct implications for food security, health, and economic stability,” he added

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday outlined Pakistan’s priorities and measures to address climate change-related threats effectively. Speaking at a symposium he said, the challenges included air pollution, water scarcity and pollution, deforestation and land degradation, climate change vulnerability, biodiversity loss, waste management crisis, and food security. “Despite these challenges, Pakistan has been a regional leader in advocating for climate adaptation and water conservation, and we have taken proactive steps to address these threats,” he noted. The minister was speaking as chairperson of the session “The Pakistan Symposium on Governance and Climate Change” at an international conference titled “Breathe

Pakistan,” held in collaboration with local Media outlet, the Ministry of Climate Change, the Government of Punjab, and the United Nations. Sharing the current state of climate and environment in Pakistan, he said major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad frequently rank among the world’s most polluted urban centers. The minister said Lahore’s Air Quality Index (AQI) has exceeded 400 during peak smog seasons—far beyond the WHO’s safe limit of 50, whereas vehicular emissions, industrial discharge, and low-quality fuels were major contributors. “With 135,000 deaths annually linked to air pollution, this is a silent crisis that demands urgent policy action.” Commenting on water scarcity and pollution, he said that according to estimates, Pakistan’s water availability has dropped significantly from 5,600 cubic meters per capita in the 1950s to less

than 1,000 cubic meters today, placing it at the brink of absolute water scarcity by 2025. “Around 80% of Pakistan’s water sources are unsafe for consumption, contributing to 100,000 child deaths annually from waterborne diseases. This has direct implications for food security, health, and economic stability,” he added. With forest cover at only 5.4%, far below the recommended 25%, he said Pakistan was losing 27,000 hectares of forest annually due to illegal logging and urban expansion. “This accelerates soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and carbon emissions, undermining our ability to combat climate change.” On climate change vulnerability, Ahsan Iqbal said that across the region, Pakistan has also faced heightened climate-induced emergencies, with floods, heatwaves, and droughts impacting more than 40 million people in recent years. “Paki-

stan ranks 8th on the Global Climate Risk Index by Germanwatch. Our melting glaciers, which supply 60% of our water, are disappearing at an alarming rate.” He said the 2022 floods submerged one-third of the country, displacing millions and causing \$30 billion in damages, adding, “Agriculture, contributing 19% to GDP and employing 38% of the workforce, faces severe threats from unpredictable weather, soil degradation, and reduced water availability.” Despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan, he said was among the top ten most climate-vulnerable countries. He said Pakistan was actively engaged in global climate efforts, particularly through the Paris Agreement and subsequent COP meetings, including COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. As a responsible global partner, Ahsan

said Pakistan has strengthened national climate adaptation plans, advocated for a fair Loss & Damage Fund to support vulnerable nations, and developed ecosystem-based adaptation strategies. He said the Ministry of Planning was embedding climate resilience into Pakistan’s national development agenda through the 5Es Framework, adding that its third ‘E’ “Environment and Climate Change; Water & Food Security” focused on enhancing climate resilience, self-reliant adaptation measures, and sustainable practices to combat natural disasters, including the impacts of droughts, cyclones, glacial lake outburst floods, smog, and other natural disasters. “Our leadership is committed to ensuring that Pakistan is not just a victim of climate change, but a proactive architect of climate solutions,” he remarked.



## Syedaal invites British businesses to explore investment options

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting Senate Chairman Syedaal Khan on Thursday invited British businesses to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan and said that the country offers a favourable environment for foreign investors. During a meeting with the UK Deputy Speaker and his delegation at the Parliament House, he urged British traders and companies to invest in Pakistan’s energy, technology, and industrial sectors to enhance economic cooperation between the two nations. The delegation included the Political

Advisor to the British High Commission and officials from the House of Commons. Syedaal Khan underscored the importance of strengthening parliamentary relations between Pakistan and the UK. Both sides discussed democratic values, parliamentary cooperation, and various aspects of bilateral relations. He reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to fostering ties with the UK through parliamentary diplomacy. Addressing the issue of Palestine, the acting chairman stressed that protecting the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people is a collective responsibility of the global community. He

urged the UK government to play an active role in ending human rights violations in Palestine and to take concrete steps toward ensuring lasting peace in the Middle East. He also called for intensified diplomatic efforts for a just resolution to the conflict. Highlighting Pakistan’s economic potential, Syedaal Khan spoke about the abundant natural resources in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the strategic importance of Gwadar Port. He stated that effective utilization of these resources could significantly strengthen the national economy. He also briefed the UK delegation on Gwadar Port’s role as

a trade hub, offering vast opportunities for international investors. The discussions also covered parliamentary proceedings, government-opposition consultations, and legislative matters. Both sides agreed on the need to expand economic and trade relations through enhanced parliamentary cooperation. In honor of the visiting delegation, a special luncheon was hosted at the Senate Banquet Hall by Acting Senate Chairman Syedaal Khan. The UK Deputy Speaker appreciated Pakistan’s democratic progress and thanked the acting chairman for his warm hospitality.

## Climate change biggest threat, impediment to Pak’s environmental resilience

ISLAMABAD: The global experts convened at the Breathe Pakistan International Climate Change Conference warned that exacerbating climate change was the biggest threat and impediment to the countries of the global south especially Pakistan to achieve economic and environmental resilience. The inaugural of the two-day conference titled “The World, Pakistan & Provinces in Climate Change” was opened by Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal who critically outlined the country’s rising climate vulnerability, its losses and damages embraced during past climatic disasters and the government’s initiatives leading climate change from the front. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mohamed Yahya in his keynote address quoted the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres’ remarks saying, “We are on a Highway to Climate Hell with our foot still on the accelerator.” He added that the greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) continued to rise towards a catastrophic increase of earth temperature of 3.1 degrees Celsius by the end of this century which was far beyond the targets agreed under the Paris Agreement. In the 2022 floods, he said Pakistan’s experience was globally known as it faced about \$30 billion economic losses, with one-third country submerged. This magnitude of disaster should have been a wake-up call to the world but still emissions were rising and support to vulnerable nations to respond to the climate disasters was needed, he added. Climate injustice which was a global buzzword had become a reality for the communities in many parts of Pakistan, he said, adding, “Living Indus Initiative was recognized by the UN World Restoration as a flagship programme and it is one of the most ambitious climate adaptation and river restoration projects that aims to restore 30 per cent Indus Basin by 2030.” Pakistan’s leadership for restoring Indus River should be a source for national pride and a call for international help, Mohamed Yahya said. Pakistan and the region must invest broadly in climate resilience, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and mobilize private sector, he added. Global Director for Climate Change, World Bank, Valerie Hickey shared the sentiments expressed by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and noted that the world was on the track to reach 3.1 degrees Celsius temperature rise. World Bank co-wrote the Climate and Development Report that showed Pakistan would lose 6.59 per cent of its GDP annually by 2050 due to climate change. —DNA

## Türkiye envoy meets Shaza

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunications (MoITT) met with Turkish Ambassador H.E. Mr. Irfan Nezioğlu to discuss bilateral cooperation in IT, telecommunications, and digital transformation. Secretary IT&T Mr. Zarrar Hasham Khan and Special Secretary IT&T Mr. Azfar Manzoor also attended. The Ambassador reaffirmed Pakistan-Türkiye’s strong ties, recalling Türkiye’s support during Türkiye’s recent earthquake and emphasizing regional cooperation amid global challenges. He also announced the Turkish President’s visit to Pakistan next week. Ambassador Nezioğlu highlighted Türkiye’s digital transformation, including 67 million estate users, 8,000 digital services, technoparks, private IT firms, and advancements in 5G and AI. He stated, “Effort brings rewards, as Allah has said.” He stressed the importance of leveraging Pakistan’s young talent for technological progress and identified shared interests in IT and telecom. —APP

## AIOU elects as CINVU President for second consecutive term

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has been elected as the President of the Executive Committee of the COMSTech Inter-Islamic Network on Virtual/Open Universities (CINVU) for the second consecutive term. The fourth General Assembly meeting of CINVU was held from February 4 to 5, 2025, at Payame Noor University in Tehran, where Vice Chancellors from open universities across 57 Islamic countries participated, said a press release on Thursday. Member countries elected new representatives for the CINVU Executive Committee for the next four years. In recognition of Allama Iqbal Open University’s outstanding contributions to quality education and its active role within CINVU, the university was unanimously elected as a member of the Executive Committee. Subsequently, the elected committee members appointed Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood as the Chair/President of the CINVU Executive Committee for the term 2025-2029. It is noteworthy that Allama Iqbal Open University has been a founding member of CINVU since 2018 and is now serving as the President/Chair of the Executive Committee for the second consecutive time. —DNA

## PEC aims for Generative AI certification of 15000 engineers

ISLAMABAD: The first cohort of the Pakistan Engineering Council’s (PEC) Generative AI course successfully concluded with a ceremony held here at PEC Headquarters. Developed in collaboration with Pak Angels Silicon Valley USA, iCodeGuru, and Aspire Pakistan, the six-week training program was tailored for engineers registered with PEC, engineering managers, university faculty, and students, as well as corporate sponsorship partners. The course provided international certification with a traceable QR code and covered key topics, including an introduction to Generative AI, generative models, and hands-on exercises. Launched on December 1, 2024, the inaugural cohort saw overwhelming interest, with 18,000 engineers applying for the program. Out of the 5,000 engineers who participated in the free online course, 1,258 successfully qualified and were awarded certificates. During the closing ceremony, the top 10 engineers from the cohort were announced, along with three standout teams recognized for their exceptional performance. Speaking at the occasion, Chairman PEC Engr Waseem Nazir highlighted the significance of the program.—APP

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## Briefs

ICC observes  
Solidarity  
Day ensuring  
support to  
Kashmiri  
people

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Citizens Committee (ICC) held here meeting of special Executive Committee (EC), where its executive members reiterated their support to the Kashmiri people in their just struggle, right of self-determination. While observing the Solidarity Day, they paid tributes to them for their heroic sacrifices, ensuring that they fully stand by them for their freedom from Indian suppression. In a show of unwavering support, the ICC unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming solidarity with the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir. The resolution aimed to express ICC's commitment to the Kashmiri people's struggle for self-determination and freedom. This move is in line with Pakistan's nationwide observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day, which honors the sacrifices of Kashmiri martyrs and condemns human rights violations in Indian-occupied Kashmir.—APP

Rs 1m loan to be given to youngsters going abroad for employment

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, has said that as many as Rs one million loan would be given to youngsters going abroad for employment. Talking to APP, Mashhood said that the amount would be provided to assist them with training, visa, travel expenses and initial settlement costs. The aim of this initiative was to provide better economic opportunities to young individuals and enable them to compete in the international job market.

Dr. Mukhtar  
visits PMDC

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health, Dr. Mukhtar Bharath on Thursday visited Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) and received briefing on the functioning of the body. According to spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, President PMDC briefed Dr. Mukhtar Bharath about the affairs of the institution. Dr. Mukhtar Bharath also visited IT office of PMDC to examine PMDC's IT and digitalization system where he expressed confidence on the ongoing initiatives. He said that PMDC should alert the concerned institutes to ensure verification process within three days. He issued instructions to dispose of pending applications as soon as possible. He said that PMDC inspection system will be digitized on emergency basis. Dr. Mukhtar Bharath directed to ensure redressal of complaints regarding registration and licensing of doctors on priority basis. He said that the government is determined to make the quality of medical education in Pakistan as per international standards.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review Task Management System for Privatization and the ongoing process of Privatization of SOEs.—DNA

Azerbaijani student  
conducts research at  
James Allison Institute

Highlighting the key advantages and challenges of studying in Germany and the U.S., Nurmammadova said: "Adapting to both environments requires time and patience. Since I moved to Germany when I was 18, I integrated into German culture quite quickly

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Amina Nurmammadova, an Azerbaijani PhD student at the MD Anderson Cancer Center Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, shared insights on her medical journey with the Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC). According to AZERTAC, she is currently pursuing her PhD at the MD Anderson Cancer Center Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nurmammadova said she is also conducting research at the James P. Allison Institute to enhance the effectiveness of immunotherapeutic drugs for cancer treatment. "I started my medical studies at the Azerbaijan Medical University and moved to Germany after a year of studies. I completed both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Molecular Medicine at Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen," she added. Nurmammadova highlighted the key

reasons why she chose to study medicine, sharing her path to immunology and oncology, a medical speciality that focuses on diagnosing, treating, and preventing cancer. "My initial goal was always to become a physician, which is why I began my studies at the Azerbaijan Medical University. After moving to Germany, I aimed to continue my education in the medical faculty as a human medicine student. However, after joining a research lab at the Institute of Pathology and Neuropathology in Tübingen and being exposed to scientific work—especially in immunology and oncology—I was completely fascinated. I had always been deeply interested in oncology, but as I learned more about the critical role of research in advancing cancer treatment, I realized that my true passion lay in scientific discovery. This led me to dedicate my career to developing novel therapeutic strategies for patients whose can-

cers resist chemotherapy and conventional treatments available on the market," she noted. Highlighting the key advantages and challenges of studying in Germany and the U.S., Nurmammadova said: "Adapting to both environments requires time and patience. Since I moved to Germany when I was 18, I integrated into German culture quite quickly. I really appreciated the structured, rule-based education system and the overall environment there. However, moving to the U.S. at 24 has been a much bigger challenge for me. Leaving behind a partially established life and starting over in a completely new country feels like beginning from scratch. After receiving rigorous training, adapting to the workflow in the U.S. is not too difficult. However, the education system differs significantly. From my observations, college education in Germany is more challenging than in the U.S. The level of depth in

studies is much higher in Germany, which is why I am grateful to have completed my undergraduate degree there. I believe it provided me with a strong foundation that has opened many doors in the scientific field." "I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Biomedical Sciences at UTHealth MD Anderson Cancer Center, specializing in Immunology and Quantitative Sciences. My goal is to understand the mechanisms that drive resistance to immunotherapy in cancer patients and to improve treatment responses by deciphering cell-cell interactions within the tumor microenvironment (TME) that contribute to diverse patient outcomes. After completing my PhD, I aim to continue advancing my career in research, focusing on translational studies to bridge the gap between scientific discoveries and clinical applications," she underlined. I am currently a member of the Azerbaijani-

American Medical Association. Additionally, I was recently invited to give a webinar for the AzerMDS community, and I was delighted to introduce young medical students to the idea of pursuing a career in research. Apart from that, I have presented my academic work through posters at multiple conferences in Germany. I am excited about the future and happy to share my journey on various platforms. In particular, I look forward to supporting and encouraging women in Azerbaijan to pursue careers in medical research and science. My next priority is to complete my doctoral degree and advance my career as an independent scientist, contributing to the development of therapeutic drugs for cancer patients. My goal is to integrate diverse modalities of medical research by bringing together clinicians, pharmaceutical companies, and basic scientists. By combining our expertise, I aim to develop personalized treatment approaches for cancer patients.

ITP  
crackdown  
on illegal  
parking at  
Faizabad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Thursday launched a major operation at Faizabad against illegal parking and unregulated taxi stands, removing unlawfully parked vehicles to ensure smooth traffic flow. A public relations officer told APP that the Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Syed Zeeshan Haider personally supervised the operation, emphasizing that no unauthorized taxi stand would be allowed in the area. CTO Zeeshan said a designated location would be allocated for taxi stands to facilitate drivers while maintaining order on the roads. "Bike-riding service providers will also not be allowed to park without an official stand," the CTO added.—APP

ANF seizes  
over 148 kg  
drugs in 3  
operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting three operations seized over 148 kg drugs worth Rs 10 million and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that total 148.825 kg drugs worth more than Rs 10 million were recovered in the operations. 72 kg hashish and 9.6 kg opium were recovered from secret cavities of a car intercepted near Hayatabad Toll Plaza Ring Road Peshawar. 62.4 kg hashish and 4.8 kg opium were recovered from the bags near Bus stand GT Road in Gujranwala and two accused were arrested.—APP

Police seize  
70,000 kites,  
charge-sheet  
SHO in crack-  
down

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police had launched a rigorous crackdown on kite flying, seizing over 70,000 kites and more than 10,000 kite strings in the past week. Authorities had also charge-sheeted the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Secretariat Police Station over inappropriate language use, with a departmental inquiry underway. A public relations officer told media that strict legal actions were being taken against those involved in kite flying.—APP

Cooperate with polio teams,  
don't shut door on vaccination

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Pediatric Association expert appealed to parents Thursday to ensure their children receive 15-20 doses of polio vaccine in frequent drives to boost immunity, while also seeking public cooperation with polio teams ahead of the February 9 vaccination campaign. Pediatric expert Dr. Dur e Shahwar in her exclusive conversation with a private news channel urged parents to change their attitude towards polio vaccination and ensure their children receive all frequent drops during vaccination drives.

The government has indeed launched the year's

first nationwide anti-polio campaign, which started on February 3 and will run until February 9, she highlighted. The campaign aims to administer polio drops to over 4 crore children under the age of five, in an effort to eradicate the disease, she added. This initiative is part of the government's determination to completely eliminate polio from the country by 2025. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his commitment to this goal, emphasizing the importance of dedicated teamwork and international support in the fight against polio, she said. She emphasized that this is crucial to secure their children's fu-

ture and protect them from the debilitating disease. Dr. Shahwar appealed to parents to cooperate with polio teams and open their doors for vaccinators, stressing that every dose counts in building immunity against polio. She also warned that if Pakistani citizens travel abroad with undetected polio, they risk transmitting the virus to other countries, which could have far-reaching consequences for global health.

Dr. Shahwar revealed that recent environmental samples have tested positive for polio virus, highlighting the ongoing risk of transmission and the need for sustained vaccination efforts. She

further mentioned that Pakistan, alongside Afghanistan, remains one of the last two countries in the world where polio is still endemic. The spread of false information on social media has contributed to widespread misconceptions about the polio vaccine, she regretted. To overcome these challenges, the government has been conducting extensive polio vaccination drives at every union council level, leveraging social media platforms to raise awareness and promote the importance of vaccination, she said. By utilizing these channels, the government aims to reach a wider audience, dispel misconceptions.—APP

OIC-COMSTECH, Bangladesh  
strengthen research collaboration

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (OIC-COMSTECH) and Bangladesh held a high-profile Educational and Research Cooperation meeting in Dhaka on Thursday. The meeting hosted by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH aimed to enhance collaboration in education and research between COMSTECH and Bangladesh, said a news release. The event saw the participation of key academic leaders from Bangladesh, including Professor Dr. SMA Faiz, Chairman of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC), accompanied by two UGC members. Vice Chancel-

ors from Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Bangladesh Open University (NSU), Daffodil International University, Islamic Arabic University and Chairman of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh attended the meeting. The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration in higher education and research. The major topics included academic exchange programs, joint research initiatives, faculty development, and capacity-building projects. The UGC Chairman requested assistance from Dr. Choudhary to elevate the status of Bangladeshi universities in international rankings. Dr. Choudhary assured support from COMSTECH and proposed a visit by relevant experts to be supported

by the COMSTECH. The visit will include a series of seminars organized by UGC in various universities across Bangladesh, sharing insights and best practices for improving rankings. Dr. Choudhary introduced an innovative educational framework, the "3UIM" model, to the UGC Chairman. This model involves three years of intensive academic teaching and skill development, followed by one year of practical industry experience, where students identify real-world problems and develop solutions. This model aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry, equipping students with practical problem-solving skills crucial for the job market. Dr. Choudhary extended an invitation to a Bangladeshi higher education leadership to visit COMSTECH

headquarters and top universities in Pakistan to strengthen academic and research collaboration, facilitate knowledge-sharing and joint initiatives, and foster stronger ties among OIC member countries. The OIC-COMSTECH and Bangladesh Educational and Research Cooperation meeting marked a significant milestone in advancing Bangladesh's academic landscape. The discussions and upcoming initiatives will not only benefit Bangladeshi universities but also contribute to scientific progress and educational excellence across the Muslim Ummah. This collaboration is expected to pave the way for new opportunities in research, innovation, and academic development, ultimately strengthening ties between Bangladesh and the broader OIC community.

Kashmir's  
struggle for  
freedom will  
continue:  
Mushaal

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Yaseen Malik, wife of Hurriyat leader Yaseen Malik Thursday emphasized that Kashmir's struggle for freedom will continue until victory, despite India's attempts to suppress the movement through draconian policies and human rights abuses. In an Radio Pakistan' current Affair program, she expressed deep concern over the international community's lack of involvement in the Kashmir dispute, stating that Pakistan is the only country actively supporting the Kashmiris' right to self-determination. Mushaal emphasized that India's declaration of the Kashmir dispute as its internal matter is contrary to the UN charter.—APP

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 247

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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## Embracing AI

THE 20th-century British science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke famously observed that any sufficiently advanced technology was indistinguishable from magic. Clarke spent much of his life foretelling, with unerring accuracy, the nature of the world in which we now live. In 1945, for example, he proposed a system of satellites in geostationary orbits ringing the Earth, upon which we now rely for communication and navigation. In 1964, he suggested that the workers of the future "will not commute ... they will communicate." Sound familiar? And again in 1964, Clarke predicted that, in the world of the future, "the most intelligent inhabitants ... won't be men or monkeys, they'll be machines, the remote descendants of today's computers. Now, the present-day electronic brains are complete morons. But this will not be true in another generation. They will start to think, and eventually they will completely out-think their makers." It is the accuracy of that last prediction – what Clarke called "machine learning," now usually referred to as artificial intelligence – that most exercises those who feel threatened by it. It would be fair to say that AI, or more accurately the exponential speed at which it is acquiring new and innovative capabilities, is not being universally welcomed. There are two main areas of concern, the first of which may be summarized as: "AI will eventually kill us all." This may seem far-fetched, but the thought process that leads to the doomsday conclusion is not without logic. Broadly, it is that a superior intelligence must eventually reach the inevitable conclusion that humanity is an inferior species, destroying the planet on which it relies for its very existence, and should therefore be eliminated for the protection of everything else. Elon Musk worked this out a long time ago. Why do you think he wants to go to Mars? Fortunately, humanity is not reliant on Musk for its survival: for that we must thank another great exponent of the science fiction genre, Isaac Asimov. In 1942, he formulated the Three Laws of Robotics, which broadly regulate the relationship between us and machines, and in 1986 he added another law to precede the first three. It states: "A robot may not injure humanity or, through inaction, allow humanity to come to harm." Asimov's laws apply to fictional machines, of course, but they still influence the ethics that underpin the creation and programming of all artificial intelligence. So, on the whole, I think we are safe. The second area of concern may be broadly summarized as: "AI is coming for all our jobs." While this one may have more traction, it is not a new fear and it predates AI by centuries. It is not difficult to imagine the inventor of the wheel, showing off his creation but being greeted with skepticism by his Neolithic friends: "No good will come of this. Our legs will become redundant, and those of future generations will wither away and die. This contraption must be destroyed." Before the first Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, most people in Europe and North America lived in agrarian communities and worked by hand. The advent of the water mill and the steam engine threw many out of work, as traditional crafts such as spinning and weaving cotton became redundant. However, jobs that had not previously existed were created for boiler makers, ironsmiths and mechanics. It happened again in the late 19th century, when steam power was superseded by electricity and steam mechanics retrained to become electricians.



## Oil still runs the world

CHINA and the rest of the world remain thirsty for oil. That means the commodity's central and volatile role in geopolitics continues, with decades-old realities driving economics, trade, alliances and conflicts for the countries dependent on fossil fuels. Yet, change lies ahead. Last month's short-lived rally underscores oil's mercurial clout. Brent crude hit a four-month high of US\$82 a barrel after the United States expanded sanctions on Russia and Iran. Oil-supply news shocks continue to have an immediate and enormous impact on the global economy; other policy shifts such as tariff increases matter too. Meanwhile, after years of production cuts, Opec+ members refuse to ramp up supplies before April, if even then. US President Donald Trump wants America to "drill, baby, drill", thereby forcing prices down to the detriment of oil-producing states like Russia and Saudi Arabia. While traders remain hopeful that Beijing's stimulus, including the first easing of monetary policy in 14 years, will boost China's appetite for oil, an unsteady, tepid recovery might persist. Global oil consumption is likely to peak by 2030, assuming that the world remains roughly the same, the International Energy Agency forecasts. On the other hand, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries does not see peak oil happening any time soon. In the short term, imports by China, the world's largest buyer of crude, are likely to rise by only 1 per cent this year, driven partly by production of petroleum-based chemicals as electric vehicles reduce consumption of petrol. China's dependence on imports is projected to remain around 70 per cent between 2026 and 2030, according to state energy giant China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), with Russia supplying nearly 20 per cent of crude imports. IDIOT'S GUIDE TO TRUMP'S TARIFFS Much of the outlook for oil consumption by China and the rest of the world will depend on when the "age of electricity" arrives – an era when production of kilowatt-hours increases exponentially through renewables and nuclear power as costs plummet. But economic travails, war, political upheaval and supply dynamics (from embargoes to extraction productivity) will continue roiling the oil market even as electricity displaces oil. Markets chase whimsies, misread politics and cower to baseless fears as often as they are led by financial results. With so many unpredictable factors, bad forecasts are inevitable. A few years ago, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the steepest drop in oil prices in history to negative levels, as low as negative-US\$37.63 per barrel in April 2020 for one benchmark. Pundits relished writing "end of oil" epitaphs. Yet, oil prices rebounded in step with soaring consumer demand worldwide. The unexpected can quickly sweep away widely believed trends. Most arrows point to a world – particularly China – dependent on oil for decades to come, but also a market awash in oil as production outpaces demand. All suggests downward pressure on oil prices for some time ahead unless producers scale back dramatically, hostilities escalate and the shipping industry implodes. Oil's supremacy, even if it is diminishing, continues to explain old and new ways of engagement by the great powers. It remains a source of many landmines for diplomacy. Russia's ability to hold countries to ransom with its energy resources has proven to be weaker than feared. The European Union quickly cut overall imports of Russian crude by 90 per cent through sanctions and alternatives supplies.

## Presidential leadership and systemic transformation

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The extent to which a president comprehends and adapts to these forces ranging from domestic economic shifts to geopolitical imperatives largely determines the effectiveness of their administration. However, the forces driving these changes, such as technological advancements or economic crises, are not within the direct control of any president. Rather, they necessitate strategic facilitation and policy adaptation.

THE political and economic landscape of the United States is characterized by cyclical transformations that redefine its socio-economic order. Each cycle reveals both strengths and limitations, shaping governance structures while also being influenced by them. The role of the president in such transitions is not that of an absolute ruler but rather a presiding authority who responds to emerging realities, sometimes in alignment with prevailing forces and at other times in opposition. The extent to which a president comprehends and adapts to these forces ranging from domestic economic shifts to geopolitical imperatives largely determines the effectiveness of their administration. However, the forces driving these changes, such as technological advancements or economic crises, are not within the direct control of any president. Rather, they necessitate strategic facilitation and policy adaptation. One of the most illustrative cases of such systemic shifts is President Ronald Reagan's economic restructuring, which laid the foundation for the contemporary financial order. Reagan's policies encouraged capital investment and led to the establishment of a new economic and social structure. His approach followed a historical pattern seen in previous administrations, wherein incoming presidents often dismantle existing frameworks to construct a novel socio-economic model. This strategy, though at times perceived as reckless or disruptive, has historically catalyzed profound economic and political transformation. A pivotal example of presidential intervention in systemic transformation is Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression. When Roosevelt assumed office in 1933, the United States faced an unprecedented economic crisis coupled with the looming threat of global conflict. Although he did not possess a definitive solution upon taking office, he understood the necessity of a radical economic and social shift to ensure national stability. Roosevelt's policies were predicated on the rejection of long-standing economic orthodoxies, such as the rigid adherence to a balanced budget as a means of ensuring prosperity. His administration undertook a series of sweeping reforms, collectively known as the New Deal, which fundamentally altered the relationship between the government and the economy. These policies, initially perceived as haphazard and unconventional, set the stage for the eventual resolution of the economic crisis. By challenging the prevailing economic ideologies, Roosevelt facilitated a paradigm shift that extended beyond domestic economic recovery and influenced global economic structures. His actions, though met with fierce opposition, reassured the public that the government was actively addressing the crisis, thereby reinforcing social and political stability. The pattern established by Roosevelt's administration has

been echoed, whether deliberately or incidentally, in subsequent presidencies, including that of Donald Trump. Similar to Roosevelt, Trump signaled the exhaustion of the existing order and sought to overturn established norms. His administration operated on the premise that systemic failures required fundamental restructuring, despite significant resistance from political adversaries and ideological opponents. While Roosevelt's primary objective was to dismantle entrenched economic doctrines that perpetuated inequality, Trump's confrontation was directed at what he perceived as a form of ideological rigidity an overemphasis on hyper-egalitarianism that, in his view, imposed restrictive norms on cultural institutions and national values. This ideological battle extended beyond economic policy to encompass broader cultural and social dimensions, reflecting a shift in the nature of systemic challenges faced by contemporary administrations. It is important to recognize that Roosevelt's policies, though transformative, were not permanent. The socio-economic structures he established eventually gave way to new cycles of economic and political reorganization, particularly with the rise of Reagan-era economic policies. This pattern of cyclical evolution underscores the impermanence of any single presidential doctrine, as each administration operates within an ever-changing historical and economic context. Throughout American history, socio-economic cycles have been closely linked to technological advancements that address pressing economic and social needs. Each transformational period has been marked by the emergence of a defining technological breakthrough that reshaped economic structures and social relations. For instance, President Andrew Jackson's era witnessed the expansion of canal infrastructure, which facilitated economic integration. Similarly, Rutherford B. Hayes presided over the rapid development of the railroad system, which revolutionized national connectivity. Roosevelt's tenure coincided with the proliferation of the automobile industry, which contributed to the rise of the middle class, while Reagan's presidency oversaw the financial restructuring that heralded the advent of the microchip era. These technological innovations, while emblematic of their respective economic cycles, were not isolated phenomena but rather responses to broader societal needs. They exemplified the inherent capacity of the United States to continuously reinvent itself, adapting to new challenges through innovation and systemic reform. This historical trajectory suggests that the contemporary era will also be defined by technological advancements that address pressing socio-economic imperatives. The socio-economic cycle currently unfolding in the United States will

undoubtedly be shaped by transformative technologies that redefine economic structures and social interactions. One of the most pressing challenges of the contemporary era is the demographic shift resulting from an aging population coupled with declining birth rates. This demographic transformation necessitates advancements in medical science and healthcare infrastructure, as well as innovations in workforce automation and artificial intelligence. The increasing proportion of elderly individuals in the population will require systemic adjustments in healthcare, financial support mechanisms, and workforce participation. This, in turn, is likely to drive a revolution in medical technologies and healthcare delivery systems. The necessity of maintaining economic productivity despite a shrinking workforce will accelerate the development and integration of artificial intelligence, robotics, and material sciences. These innovations will not only reshape economic structures but also necessitate a reevaluation of long-standing policy assumptions, such as the role of immigration in sustaining labor markets. While the specifics of these emerging solutions remain uncertain, historical patterns suggest that they will materialize as responses to pressing economic and social needs. The role of the president in this transition will not be to dictate the course of innovation but rather to facilitate an environment conducive to systemic adaptation. This includes fostering investment in research and development, addressing regulatory challenges, and navigating socio-political resistance to change. Conclusion: Presidential Stewardship and Systemic Evolution The evolution of socio-economic cycles in the United States underscores the dynamic interplay between presidential leadership and systemic transformation. While presidents do not possess absolute control over the forces shaping these cycles, their ability to comprehend and respond to emerging realities significantly influences national trajectories. The historical precedent established by figures such as Roosevelt, Reagan, and Trump illustrates the recurring pattern of systemic restructuring, wherein entrenched orders are dismantled to pave the way for new economic and social frameworks. The current socio-economic cycle is poised for a transformative shift driven by demographic changes and technological advancements. As with previous cycles, this transition will necessitate bold policy decisions and a willingness to challenge established norms. The task of the presidency, therefore, remains consistent across time: to preside over systemic evolution, clear the pathway for innovation, and engage with the inevitable conflicts that accompany transformative change. While each cycle presents unique challenges, the historical resilience of the American socio-economic order suggests that adaptive solutions will emerge, ensuring continued national progress and renewal.

## GCC-Latin American integration potential has just risen

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

This state of affairs has spilled over into economic relations.

There are now multiple undeclared trade wars between key economic players, such as the US, China and the EU. President Donald Trump's policy of economic nationalism, including proposing high tariffs on Canada and Mexico and restrictions on trade and investment, is leading some of America's neighbors to explore other options. Since 2005, the Gulf Cooperation Council has tried to grow trade and investment relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries, with only limited success. When this process started almost two decades ago, there was little connectivity between the two regions – no direct air flights

THE Ukraine and Gaza wars have weakened the international system, devaluing international laws and customs and paralyzing important multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council. This state of affairs has spilled over into economic relations. There are now multiple undeclared trade wars between key economic players, such as the US, China and the EU. President Donald Trump's policy of economic nationalism, including proposing high tariffs on Canada and Mexico and restrictions on trade and investment, is leading some of America's neighbors to explore other options. Since 2005, the Gulf Cooperation Council has tried to grow trade and investment relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries, with only limited success. When this process started almost two decades ago, there was little connectivity between the two regions – no direct air flights or shipping routes. Trade and investment were negligible. Now, that has changed, with direct flights from Gulf hubs to a few Latin American cities and direct shipping on the rise. There are important investment partnerships and two-way trade has increased eightfold, reaching about \$20 billion. However, the full potential of the two regions' integration has yet to be realized. Taking Latin America, the GCC and the rest of the Arab world together, they have a combined gross domestic product of close to \$10 trillion, more than 1 billion inhabitants and many shared historical and cultural connections. There are countless opportunities to grow mutually beneficial partnerships between the two regions, politically, economically and culturally. Now is a good time to realize some of those opportunities. Although trade between them is growing, it accounts for less than 0.2 percent of the two regions' GDP. Trade is focused mainly on ties between the GCC and Brazil thanks, in great measure, to the initiatives of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, starting with his May 2015 hosting of the first ever Arab-South American Summit in Brasilia. This was followed by high-level visits, conferences and trade exhibits, which resulted in the establishment of those trade and political ties. A GCC-MERCOSUR agreement and trade negotiations soon followed, as well as general

agreements and contacts with individual countries, such as Peru, Mexico, Argentina and Chile, and groups such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Association of Caribbean States. However, other than growing economic ties with Brazil, the results have been modest. The current breakdown in the global political system, trade wars and the increasingly inward-looking US policies are encouraging countries and groups of states to seek regional and bloc-to-bloc engagement. In a recent GCC-Latin American forum involving officials and experts, participants discussed a number of levers to integrate the two regions. There are three main areas that will be essential to sustainable integration: political dialogue, trade and investment, and tourism and people-to-people engagement. Strategic dialogue is essential to guide this integration process and focus on the strategic imperatives of this important relationship. President Lula's vision in 2005 was instrumental in bringing the two regions together. Sustained strategic dialogue at all levels – heads of state and government, ministers, senior officials and experts – will be needed to heighten interest. It is also essential to scale up the areas of interest and potential benefits from the two regions' integration. For example, this dialogue could include creating political partnerships to deal with geopolitical challenges, especially the increasing global polarization and growing security threats, such as terrorism and drug trafficking. Studies have shown that useful economic partnerships are plentiful. The GCC, the Inter-American Development Bank, consulting companies and independent think tanks have identified great opportunities in both regions. What is needed is a regular trade and investment dialogue to help realize them, by sharing information and easing trading restrictions to create a more hospitable environment for traders and investors. This dialogue needs to take place on both the

public and private levels. Business-to-business discussions would identify business opportunities and desired partnerships, while official meetings will be needed to remove any trade or investment barriers and adopt any changes needed to make the two-way trade and investment more attractive. For example, over the past 20 years, transportation links have grown significantly between the GCC countries and a few Latin American countries, but that needs to be extended to more countries in Latin America and especially the Caribbean, where connectivity is still a challenge. Investment in infrastructure is one of those opportunities, whereby companies from both regions could work together to build badly needed transportation hubs, roads, airports and seaports. People-to-people engagement has improved after the start of direct flights between the two regions, but those are still limited in number. In addition to more flights, there is an urgent need to explore visa-free travel and eased visa procedures between the two regions, or at least between countries that are ready to do so. This would boost both business ties and tourism. There have been numerous cultural exchanges in recent years, but with thriving arts scenes in both regions and a long shared history and culture between them, there is an opportunity to do more. Easier visa procedures and additional funding will be needed and those are within reach if there is more engagement on the other pillars – the strategic and the economic. One challenge that has hampered efforts to integrate the two regions is the weak institutional structure that could underpin this process and make it sustainable. For example, when Lula left office in 2011, the growing engagement at the time suffered tremendously. Changes in leadership in some Latin American countries and the occasional ruptures have also left an impact. Establishing a solid institutional structure would sustain the integration process over time and any possible rough patches. The GCC is ready to engage and is currently exploring potential partners to provide such institutional structure.

—The writers is the Gulf Cooperation Council assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation.

## Briefs

## Two human traffickers arrested

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The victim was reportedly held in safe houses in Libya before being forced onto a boat bound for Greece. Ali, a resident of Jalalpurjattan, tragically lost his life in the shipwreck. Meanwhile, suspect Muhammad Owais was involved in defrauding a complainant by falsely promising employment in Canada. According to the FIA, Owais extracted a total of Rs 5.1 million from the victim but failed to fulfill his commitment. After failing to send the complainant abroad, Owais went into hiding before being tracked down and arrested. The FIA has vowed to continue its efforts against human trafficking rings operating in Pakistan, ensuring that those involved in such illegal activities are brought to justice.

## J. Shah stresses urgent...

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ensure transparency in funding. "Those responsible for pollution are often beyond national borders, making global cooperation essential," he added. Discussing the judiciary's role, Justice Shah mentioned that when climate issues were raised in the High Court, the government was unaware of their severity. He emphasized that climate justice requires financial resources, and without proper funding, addressing climate change remains a distant dream. He also noted that climate change affects every aspect of human life, making climate finance a fundamental right. "Pakistan urgently needs a Climate Change Authority and a dedicated Climate Change Fund, yet no funds currently exist," he maintained.

## Qureshi emphasises 'national...'

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it...incumbent rulers should think about the country with open hearts and minds," said the former foreign minister. His remarks come after the former ruling party ended its negotiations with the PML-N-led government last month over the government's failure to constitute judicial commissions on events that transpired on May 9, 2023, and November 24-27 as stipulated in its written charter of demands. The dialogue between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led government and the PTI commenced in late December after months of heightened political tensions.

## KP to send jirga to...

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the interim government in Kabul. Meanwhile, Adviser to KP Chief Minister on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said: "Peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan is interlinked." Barrister Saif said they wanted peace and brotherly relations between the two countries. Both countries enjoy economic, political, and cultural relations, he said, adding that they want to increase the business ties between the two sides. Sources privy to the matter said the Afghan authorities had contacted the provincial government in this regard, adding that a grand Jirga would be held after initial talks between the two sides.

## Waqas decries...

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that PTI, following its founder's directives, would observe February 8 as a "black day." He claimed that the party's Quetta office had been raided for the third time in a month, strongly condemning the arrests and coercion tactics. "The government is sowing division through such strong-arm tactics," he remarked, warning that those responsible would eventually be held accountable. He urged the Chief Justice to take notice of the ongoing "oppression and coercion." Referring to the tenure of the Chief Election Commissioner.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with the President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman. —DNA

## Newcastle outclass Arsenal to reach League Cup final

Newcastle to play either Liverpool or Tottenham Hotspur in the final

## SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Newcastle United reached a second League Cup final in three seasons as they overwhelmed Arsenal 2-0 at a feverish St James' Park on Wednesday to complete a crushing 4-0 aggregate win. Moments after Arsenal's Martin Odegaard wasted a chance to halve the deficit, Jacob Murphy tucked away a rebound in the 19th minute after Alexander Isak's shot hit the woodwork. Arsenal, surprisingly beaten 2-0 at home in the first leg, suffered another off-night and their fate was sealed when Anthony Gordon punished a defensive error in the 52nd minute to put the hosts in

cruise control. Newcastle, who have not won a major trophy since 1955, will play either Liverpool or Tottenham Hotspur in the League Cup final next month when they hope to go one better than 2023 when they lost in the final to Manchester United. Tottenham hold a 1-0 lead ahead of Thursday's second-leg at Anfield. Of the 32 previous occasions that a team has lost the first leg of a League Cup semi-final by two goals or more, only once has a team recovered the deficit to reach the final. Based on the evidence of their crushing 5-1 victory over Manchester City on Sunday, it seemed entirely feasible that Arsenal might buck that trend and ruin the Georgie party. In the end it was a night of unbridled

joy on Tyneside as the club's long-suffering fans scent another shot at silverware. The outcome of the tie was probably decided just before the midway point of the first half. Had Arsenal skipper Odegaard taken a golden opportunity instead of slicing a shot hurriedly against the outside of the post, Newcastle might have been consumed by anxiety, especially as they had already had an Isak effort ruled out by VAR for the tightest of offside decisions. A minute after Odegaard's glaring miss, the marauding Isak went through on goal again and his curling shot ricocheted off the inside of the post to Murphy who stayed ice cool to steer the rebound home from a tight angle. "I was very happy

(Odegaard) missed it," Newcastle's Brazilian skipper Bruno Guimaraes said. "That was a big opportunity for them and then I think less than two minutes later we score. It was a game changer. "I felt anxious before the game, big game, Arsenal a top, top team but when we play like that we become an amazing team. Play like that and we can dream big." Arsenal suffered a further setback when Gabriel Martinelli left the pitch with a hamstring injury before halftime. With fellow forwards Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka also injured, that moment could yet have wider significance for Arsenal's season. Mikel Arteta's side never really looked comfortable and their evening

was to get even worse early in the second half. The unusually flustered William Saliba was lucky that Gordon failed to score from distance after dispossessing him and catching keeper David Raya way off his line. But Arsenal failed to heed the warning and minutes later Raya's casual pass out was nicked by Gordon who then dispatched a first-time shot past the Spanish keeper and inside the post. With the pre-match tension lifted, Newcastle were able to cruise through the rest of the game against an Arsenal side who will now have to dust themselves down and focus on trying to chase down Liverpool in the Premier League title race.

## Real Madrid legend Marcelo retires aged 36

"Sixteen seasons, 25 titles, five Champions Leagues, one of the captains and so many magical nights at the Bernabeu. What a journey!"

## WEB DESK

MADRID: Former Brazil and Real Madrid defender Marcelo announced his retirement from football on Thursday, bringing the curtain down on a trophy-laden career that included five Champions League triumphs. Marcelo, 36, played for Real from 2007-2022 and left the Spanish club with 25 trophies in 546 games, including six LaLiga titles. The defender scored in the 2014 Champions League final which gave Real 'La Decima', their long-awaited 10th European crown, kickstarting a decade of dominance where the club went on to win five more. He was also part of the squad that won three Champions League titles in a row between the 2015-16 and 2017-18 seasons. "My journey as a player ends here, but I still have so much to give football," he said in a video posted on social media

platform Instagram. "Thank you for everything," Marcelo watching him for a long time," Real Madrid presi-



also won two Copa del Rey trophies, five Spanish Super Cups, four Club World Cups and three European Super Cups with Real, whom he also captained towards the end of his stint in Madrid. "One of the greatest left backs in Real Madrid and world football history and we had the privilege of

dent Florentino Perez said in a statement. "He is one of our greatest legends and Real Madrid is and always will be his home." Marcelo last played for Brazilian Serie A side Fluminense, where he started his youth and professional career, winning the Copa Libertadores in 2023.

## COAS hockey c'ship sees three thrilling matches

SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: The Chief of Army Staff National Inter Club Hockey Championship continued to captivate audiences today, with three electrifying matches decided at the Defence Hockey Arena. In the day's opening match, Biji Ghar Red Hockey Club Mardan secured a narrow 2-1 victory over Gujra Sports Gujra. Muhammad Zaid and Zakaria Hayat scored for the winning team, while Uzair netted the lone goal for Gujra Sports Gujra. The second match saw Crescent Club Sargodha dominate Sami Abid Club Hyderabad, winning 2-0 courtesy of goals from Muhammad Sameen and Akram. In the day's final match, BK Hockey Club Lahore triumphed over Rising Star Club Islamabad, winning 2-0 with goals from Taimoor and Ahmed. The matches drew distinguished guests, including PHF Secretary Rana Mujahid, Olympian Tauqeer Dar, and Muhammad Khalid. Notable attendees also included Olympian Danish Kaleem.

## Afghanistan among Shoab's semi-finalists for CT 2025

DUBAI: Former Pakistan pacer Shoab Akhtar has predicted the four semi-finalists of the highly-anticipated ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, set to be hosted by Pakistan from February 19 to March 9. Akhtar, while talking to the media here, made a surprising call while naming his final-four as he backed the inexperienced Afghanistan side to make a cut. The former pacer insisted that if the emerging Asian side demonstrate 'maturity' and 'patience' then they can deliver surprising results in the upcoming mega event. Akhtar also named hosts and defending champions Pakistan and arch-rivals India as his remaining semi-final contenders. "I believe Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan will reach the semi-finals of the 2025 Champions Trophy," said Akhtar. "If Afghanistan's team demonstrates maturity and their batsmen show patience, they could deliver surprising results," he added. The right-arm pacer further shared that he is hopeful for green shirts to beat India before expressing his desire to see the fierce rivals colliding in the blockbuster final. "I'm hopeful that Pakistan will defeat India on February 23. In fact, I believe that both Pakistan and India should also meet in the final of the tournament. "If Pakistan defeats India and New Zealand in the Champions Trophy, the Green Shirts will have already won half the tournament." Shoab Akhtar then went on to laud the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and its chairman Mohsin Naqvi on the timely completion of the upgrade of the country's major stadia for the Champions Trophy. He also urged the fans to refrain from questioning the selection of the national team for the mega event. "Now, let's not question the team's selection anymore," Akhtar concluded. For the unversed, hosts Pakistan will kick off their Champions Trophy 2025 campaign by taking on New Zealand in the curtain raiser on February 19 in Karachi.—Agencies

## Pak, China agree to streng then...

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according to a joint statement issued by the Foreign Office on Thursday encompassing the discussions and agreements reached during the visit. "While the transformation not seen in a century is accelerating, the China-Pakistan relationship remains of strategic significance, and any attempt to disrupt or undermine it is bound to fail...The two sides agreed that the China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership is a choice by history and by the people, and enjoys broad support from all walks of life in both countries," it said. During the visit, the two sides signed over a dozen documents covering cooperation on CPEC, trade, science and technology, people's livelihoods, and media, etc. During his stay in China, President Zardari will also attend the opening ceremony of the Ninth Asian Winter Games. Besides enhancing cooperation in IT and emerging areas like artificial intelligence, big data and communication technology, the two sides agreed to expand cooperation in education, media, think tanks, youth, films and television to strengthen the bond between the two peoples and enhance mutual learning between civilizations.

## 3 cops martyred, 6 injured...

FROM PAGE 01

night, officials said on Thursday. Pakistan has recently witnessed an uptick in terrorist activities, especially in KP and Balochistan. Attacks increased after the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) broke a fragile ceasefire agreement with the government in 2022, vowing to target security officials and the police force. According to a statement from the KP Police Central Office, "Unknown terrorists opened fire from all sides at a checkpoint in Karak's Bahadur Khel area, targeting police personnel using light and heavy weapons in an attempt to capture the checkpoint." Policemen present at the checkpoint fired back in an encounter which lasted two hours, following which the terrorists fled, the statement said. Police personnel injured in the firing were shifted to Karak District Headquarter Hospital, while three of the injured were sent to Peshawar for further treatment, according to District Police Officer ShehbazElahi. The funeral prayers of the three martyred cops — identified as Taimur Hayat, Naqeeb and Adnan — were offered at the Karak Police Lines this morning. KP Inspector General of Police (IG) Zulfiqar Hameed, Kohat Regional Police Officer Abbas Majeed, Kohat Commissioner MautasimBalalallah, Karak Deputy Commissioner Shakeel Jan, and other civil officers were among the attendees.

## Envoy for strengthening Iran-Pak ties

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as one of the most defining events of the 20th century. "The revolution introduced a new political discourse based on the principles of independence, freedom, and the Islamic Republic," he noted, adding that it fostered self-reliance and sovereignty in Iran, leading to significant advancements in various fields despite external pressures and sanctions. The Ambassador emphasized Iran's long-standing policy of fostering strong ties with neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. "Our brotherly bond with Pakistan holds a special place and has been consistently emphasized by the Supreme Leader," he said. He highlighted key initiatives undertaken to bolster economic and political collaboration, including the opening of border crossings and trade markets. "These steps have significantly contributed to the economic prosperity of both nations and the wider region," he added. Ambassador Moghaddam pointed to the numerous high-level visits exchanged between the two countries in the past year as evidence of deepening ties.

## Marcus Stoinis announces ODI retirement

'This wasn't an easy decision, but I believe it's the right time for me to step away,' says Stoinis

KARACHI: Australia's fast-bowling all-rounder Marcus Stoinis on Thursday, stunned his fans by announcing his ODI retirement with immediate effect, Cricket Australia (CA) confirmed. Stoinis, who was a part of Australia's squad for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, announced to step away from the longer format to focus on T20 cricket. The 35-year-old, who represented the former champions in 71 ODIs, said it was a tough decision for him but emphasised it was the right time to make the call to focus on 'the next chapter' of his life. "Playing ODI cricket for Australia has been an incredible journey, and

I'm grateful for every moment I've had in the green and gold. Representing my

country at the highest level is something I'll always cherish. "This wasn't an

easy decision, but I believe it's the right time for me to step away from ODIs and

fully focus on the next chapter of my career. I've got a fantastic relationship with Ron (Andrew McDonald) and I've hugely appreciated his support. "I'll be cheering the boys on in Pakistan." Australia's head coach Andrew McDonald acknowledged the all-rounder's services to the team and congratulated him for all of his achievements in the ODI format. "Stoin has been such a pivotal part of our ODI setup for the past decade," said McDonald. "Not only has he been an invaluable player but also an incredible person to have in the group. He is a natural leader, an exceptionally popular player and a great person.

"He should be congratulated on his ODI career and all of his achievements." For the unversed, Marcus Stoinis's retirement will serve as yet another setback for the 2009 champions ahead of the eight-team tournament as they have already lost the services of all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who was ruled out due to a back injury. Australia's squad for Champions Trophy 2025: Pat Cummins (c), Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Aaron Hardie, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Adam Zampa.—Agencies



## Briefs

## PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,634 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing, 1,634.22 points, a negative change of 1.46 per cent, closing at 110,301.16 points as compared to 111,935.38 points on the last trading day. A total of 598,930,638 shares were traded during the day as compared to 436,325,053 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs25.629 billion against Rs23.225 billion on the last trading day. As many as 435 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 101 of them recorded gains and 286 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 48 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Silk Bank Limited with 119,523,297 shares at Rs 1.19 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 80,384,932 shares at Rs1.52 per share and Bank Makramah with 64,937,708 shares at Rs.4.15 per share. —APP

## Gold price decreases by Rs 900 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.900 and was sold at Rs 298,700 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 299,600 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.772 to Rs.256,087 from Rs. 256,859 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat came down to Rs.234,754 from Rs.235,454. The prices of per tola silver decreased by Rs.23 to Rs3,327 whereas that of ten gram dipped by Rs20 to Rs.2,852. The price of gold in the international market also decreased by \$9 to \$2,859 from \$2,868, the Association reported.—APP

## Rupee sheds 19 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Thursday depreciated by 19 paise against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs279.14 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.95. 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 increased by Rs 1.73 to close at Rs289.75 against the last day's closing of Rs288.02, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 03 paise and closed at Rs1.82, whereas an increase of Rs1.86 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs348.17 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs346.31.—APP

## Pak's total liquid foreign reserves \$ 16.04b

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 16,044.1 million while the SBP reserves recorded as \$ 11,418.3 million during the week ended on January 31, 2025. The State Bank of Pakistan, informed in a statement issued here on Thursday, that liquid foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank "increased by US\$ 46 million to US\$ 11,418.3 million" as of January 31, 2025. The breakup of the foreign reserves position shows that commercial banks held net foreign reserves of \$ 4,625.8 million during the period under review. Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on January 24, 2025, were \$ 16,052.1 million. Among them foreign reserves held by the central bank were recorded as \$ 11,372.4 million while net reserves of \$ 4,679.7 million were held by commercial banks.—APP

## Jam opens first 'Made in Pakistan' exhibition in Jeddah

Pak- KSA discuss further enhancing economic cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, held exclusive meetings with key Saudi officials to discuss strengthening economic ties and expanding trade and investment opportunities between the two nations on the sidelines of the 'Made in Pakistan' Exhibition and Business Forum in Jeddah. During a meeting with Mr. Abdul Aziz Alsakran, Deputy Governor of the General Authority of Foreign Trade, both leaders emphasized the importance of enhancing bilateral trade and investment. Alsakran congratulated the Minister and the Government of Pakistan for organizing a remarkable trade event in the Kingdom, acknowledging its role in promoting Pakistani products and fostering business linkages between the two countries, said a release issued here Thursday. In another high-level discussion, Jam Kamal Khan met with Mr. Hassan Moejeb Al-Huwaizy, Chairman of the Federation of Saudi Chambers, to explore avenues for institutional collaboration. The Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to deepening economic partnerships with Saudi Arabia and strengthening the role of business chambers in driving bilateral trade. Recognizing the Federation of Saudi Chambers' contributions to fostering economic cooperation, the Minister emphasized the need for frequent and targeted Business-to-Business (B2B) engagements. He proposed planning structured networking activities between private sector



stakeholders from both nations to unlock new trade and investment prospects. The 'Made in Pakistan' Exhibition and Business Forum, being held from February 5-7, 2025, at the Jeddah International Exhibition and Convention Centre, has brought together top Pakistani companies and Saudi investors, providing a unique platform to showcase Pakistan's industrial potential and explore collaborative opportunities in key sectors. Moreover, Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, inaugurated Pakistan's first-ever Single Country Exhibition, 'Made in Pakistan',

in Jeddah, marking a significant milestone in the strengthening of Pak-Saudi trade relations. Addressing a distinguished gathering of Saudi officials, business leaders, and diplomats, the Minister emphasized the importance of enhancing bilateral economic cooperation and showcasing Pakistan's diverse industrial potential. Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan highlighted different aspects of strong Pakistan and Saudi Arab economic ties, said a press release issued here on Thursday. In his keynote speech, Jam Kamal Khan expressed his gratitude to the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its unwavering support in organizing the exhibition. "This event is a testament to the enduring relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, rooted in shared faith, cultural ties, and strategic partnership," he stated. He highlighted that the exhibition serves as a platform to present Pakistan's best products and services, including textiles, sports goods, light engineering, food, construction materials, and more. The Minister underlined the government's commitment to expanding trade and investment ties with Saudi Arabia through strategic

economic initiatives. He noted that Pakistan's evolving industrial base and dynamic economy offer immense potential for collaboration, particularly in sectors like food security, energy, mining, and human resource development. "Our government is dedicated to fostering an investment-driven environment, and Saudi Arabia, with its Vision 2030, is ideally positioned to benefit from these opportunities," Jam Kamal Khan said. He also highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council in prioritizing Saudi investments in Pakistan.

## Nasir urges govt to reduce cost of 'Doing Business'

The ICCI President also pointed out the damaging effects of high taxes and rising energy costs on businesses, which have led to a surge in power theft and inefficiencies in the energy sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has underscored the urgent need for adopting business-friendly policies to tackle the rising cost of production. He stressed that the government must focus on implementing economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment to create a more conducive atmosphere for businesses, attract foreign investment, and ensure long-term finan-

cial stability, said a press release issued here. In a meeting with visiting business leaders on Thursday, Qureshi emphasized that rather than relying on extensive borrowing, the government should prioritize enhancing the ease of doing business. This approach, he noted, is critical to putting the country's economy on a sustainable growth trajectory. He criticized the increase in oil prices and electricity tariffs, describing them as a "fuel bomb" for businesses. He argued that these hikes, made to comply with the IMF's con-

ditions for the revival of the stalled loan program, would not only increase the cost of doing business but also escalate inflation to decades-high levels. He warned that this approach could cripple the industrial and trade sectors, discouraging both local and foreign investment. The ICCI President also pointed out the damaging effects of high taxes and rising energy costs on businesses, which have led to a surge in power theft and inefficiencies in the energy sector. He questioned why these issues were being passed onto

consumers in the form of higher tariffs, further burdening the already struggling business community. Concluding his remarks, the ICCI President urged the government to implement measures that would reduce the cost of doing business, including easing the tax burden on the power sector. He also called for stronger efforts to promote exports through incentives for trade and industry and by exploring new international markets to help Pakistan achieve sustainable economic growth. Pakistani cuisine recipes

## Oscars frontrunner 'Emilia Perez' suffers awards season crash

PARIS: Rarely has a film fallen from favour so quickly: after gaining a record number of Oscar nominations for a foreign-language movie, narco-musical "Emilia Perez" has become embroiled in scandal linked to past social media posts by star Karla Sofia Gascon. Gascon, the first transgender woman Oscar nominee for best actress, has seen her path to glory seriously compromised by her posts about Islam, US anti-racism protests, and even the Oscars themselves which she called an "ugly gala". From being a symbol of diversity embraced by Hollywood, she has risked alienating left-leaning members of the Academy who decide the Oscar winners — despite her apologies and insistence that she is "not a racist". Hollywood trade outlets reported that distributor Netflix, which was banking on "Emilia Perez" for its first best picture Oscar, had dropped the 52-year-old from its campaign and distanced itself from the best actress nominee. A Netflix web page promoting the film "for your awards consideration" contained an image of Zoe Saldana, the movie's best supporting actress nominee. Contacted by AFP, Netflix declined to comment. "Emilia Perez" French director Jacques Audiard on Wednesday disavowed his lead actress, calling Gascon's original social media posts "inexcusable" and "absolutely hateful." Audiard told trade outlet Deadline that by continuing to lash out at her critics, Gascon's "self-destructive approach" was now "harming people who were very close to her," including himself, Saldana.—APP

## US skipping G20 talks due to S. Africa's 'anti-American' agenda

SANTO DOMINGO: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday he would skip G20 talks this month in South Africa, accusing the host government of an "anti-American" agenda. Rubio's announcement comes two days after US President Donald Trump lashed out at South Africa over land reforms aimed at redressing inequalities perpetrated during the apartheid era. In a post on X that took on the tone of Trump, Rubio said he would boycott the G20 talks of foreign ministers in Johannesburg on February 20-21. "South Africa is doing very bad things. Expropriating private property. Using G20 to promote 'solidarity, equality, & sustainability,'" Rubio wrote in his post. "In other words: DEI and climate change." DEI, or diversity, equity and inclusion, has been attacked relentlessly by Trump since he returned to the White House last month. "My job is to advance America's national interests, not waste taxpayer money or coddle anti-Americanism." Earlier this week, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa rejected Trump's assertions that South Africa was "confiscating" land and said he was ready to explain his government's land reform policy to his US counterpart. On Tuesday, Ramaphosa spoke with top Trump ally Elon Musk to raise concerns about "disinformation" being spread by the US president.—APP

## Sweden mourns after school massacre

ÖREBRO: Sweden on Wednesday mourned the victims of its worst mass killing as police indicated that the gunman probably shot himself after killing 10 people at an adult education centre. Mourners left candles, flowers and notes in front of the cordoned-off Campus Risbergska, a school for young adults in Örebro, as residents joined members of the royal family to pay their respects. Police have yet to give details about the gunman or his motives but they confirmed that 11 people, "including the killer", died in Tuesday's shooting in the town west of Stockholm. Swedish media reports suggested the killer was a 35-year-old local man who had been living as a recluse and suffering from psychological problems. "We are very shocked," King Carl XVI Gustaf told reporters after he and Queen Silvia laid flowers near the school. "All of Sweden is mourning today." Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, who also visited the site on Wednesday, described the massacre as "the worst mass shooting in Swedish history". The royal couple, Kristersson and several government ministers joined hundreds at a service at Örebro's Nikolai Church. The church observed a minute of silence before dignitaries and representatives from Muslim, Buddhists and other faith groups lit candles. Survivors were still trying to make sense of Tuesday's events. "We looked at each other and we did not really understand what was happening," said 19-year-old student Isabella Hatidou, who lit a candle at the memorial on Wednesday. "There was a lot of crying and panicking but we did our best to stay quiet." Asked about reports that the gunman turned his gun on himself, Örebro police chief Roberto Eid Forest told reporters: "There is a lot to indicate that." The suspect was dead when police reached him, he said, adding that there was not yet any indication of an "ideological motive". Örebro police said they had identified the suspect but were not yet publishing his name because of the investigation. The man had been enrolled at the school in the past but had not attended classes there since 2021, according to the Aftonbladet newspaper. At the time of the attack around midday local time (1100 GMT) Tuesday, he was carrying three rifles and a knife, the paper said. One was a hunting rifle and there were reports of another being a shotgun. He reportedly hid his weapons in a guitar case and changed into military style garb in a bathroom, before the shooting began. Broadcaster TV4 published a video filmed by a student hiding in a bathroom, shots can be heard outside and after TV4 isolated audio, a person can be heard shouting: "You will leave Europe!" The broadcaster noted that the education centre also housed Swedish classes for immigrants.—DNA

## Finance minister discusses efforts to restore macroeconomic stability

Shahid, Shamsah call on Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held separate meetings with veteran economists and former caretaker Ministers for Finance, Mr. Shahid Javed Burki and Ms. Shamsah Akhtar, respectively at the Finance Division. During the meetings, views on country's economic progress and the government's strategic efforts towards restoring macroeconomic stability and laying the foundation for sustainable economic growth were exchanged. Mr. Shahid Javed Burki and Ms. Shamsah Akhtar, both widely respected for their expertise and leadership in financial and economic matters, shared valuable insights and perspectives from

their vast experience, providing constructive input to Senator Aurangzeb's ongoing efforts in economic governance. Senator

Muhammad Aurangzeb lauded the contributions of both the veteran economists in institutional building, economic policy

formulation, and economic management in various capacities. He also highlighted their roles in shaping the direction of country's

financial landscape and their distinguished service at some of the country's leading financial and academic institutions.



## Art fair brings African art to global stage

MARRAKESH: In Morocco's tourist hub of Marrakesh, a contemporary art fair has energised the local creative scene, drawing on the famed city's aesthetic legacy to propel emerging African artists into the global spotlight. The annual 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair has drawn collectors, curators and art enthusiasts from across the world, showcasing works from 30 galleries spanning 14 countries, both African and European. Senegalese designer and curator Aissa Dione said 1-54's Marrakesh edition stands out for being "a restricted, very exclusive space", which "gives more visibility" to the artists. Named in reference to Africa's 54 countries, the fair was launched in London in 2013, before expanding to New York in 2015 and Marrakesh in 2018. This year's Marrakesh edition took place over four days last week. Unlike larger-scale art fairs such as Art Basel, London's Frieze or Paris's FIAC, it operates on a smaller scale, attracting around 10,000 visitors, including 3,000 from abroad.—APP

## Gilani for facilitating business community to promote investment

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Thursday said that the facilitation of the business community was inevitable to promote investment in the country. The acting president, addressing the inauguration ceremony of a private hotel's restaurant here, said that Pakistan had immense potential for private sector's growth. Calling the Pakistani cuisine globally popular, he said that the country's culture also held a unique identity. The acting president also emphasized the concerted efforts to make Pakistan an attractive tourist destination. He recalled that while being the tourism minister, he elevated the country's tourism sector to the status of an industry. He said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council was providing a one-window facility to investors as the business community needed encouragement. Acting President Gilani also stressed the need for removing the unnecessary impediments for the business community. He told the gathering that while serving as the minister and prime minister, he had got completed various development projects in Islamabad besides taking multiple steps to promote construction sector while being the housing minister.—APP

## Iraq's famed 'hunchback' of Mosul rebuilt brick by brick

MOSUL: The leaning minaret of Mosul in northern Iraq has been restored using its original brickwork, years after it was reduced to rubble under Daesh group rule. The Al-Hadba or "hunchback" minaret is part of the historic Al-Nuri Mosque from where former IS chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in July 2014 declared his "caliphate" that committed atrocities across swathes of both Syria and Iraq. The mosque and minaret were destroyed in June 2017 during the battle to oust Daesh from Mosul, and Iraq's authorities accused the jihadists of planting explosives before their withdrawal. The minaret and mosque are the latest landmarks in Mosul to be restored by United Nations heritage body UNESCO, whose teams have worked for five years to revive several sites there. The Al-Hadba minaret of today is an exact replica of the old one, "built with the same bricks," said Abdullah Mahmud of the Iraqi department of antiquities. "Al-Hadba is our identity, and by restoring it, the identity of the city has been reclaimed." The restored minaret's tilt has been retained at 160 centimeters (63 inches), just as it was in the 1960s. However, engineers have reinforced the foundations so it no longer leans quite so precariously, as it began to do gradually after being built in the 12th century.—APP

## Briefs

### PM Shehbaz orders swift privatisation of govt depts

Shehbaz Sharif says process must be transparent, with legal hurdles addressed by hiring reputable lawyers

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed officials to expedite the process of privatising government departments, ensuring its completion within the designated timeframe. The directive was issued during a review meeting in Islamabad on Thursday, where the Task Management System for monitoring the privatisation process was discussed. The PM emphasised that the process must be carried out with full transparency and that any legal hurdles should be addressed by engaging reputable lawyers. "The services of reputable lawyers should be hired to remove legal obstacles in the privatisation process," he said. PM Shehbaz added that the privatisation initiative is part of the government's "Uraan Pakistan" programme, underlining that the role of the government is to facilitate business and investment, rather than engaging directly in business operations. "The government's job is not to do business, but to take policy measures and facilitate business and investment," he stated. He further noted that the country is progressing rapidly towards economic improvement thanks to timely reforms and called for collective efforts to advance Pakistan's development.

### JI to observe black day on Feb 08

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami will observe black day on February 08, the party's chief Hafiz Naeemur-Rehman said in a statement on Thursday. "The JI will stage strong protest outside the election commission's office in Karachi," Hafiz Naeem said. JI Ameer said that the matters will be streamlined if the judicial commission being constituted, and it takes decision on the basis of the Form 45. He said the government was not intending to tackle the issue in this manner. "The opposition was also not prepared to launch a movement on the basis of Form 45. JI Ameer said that the suggestion to hold fresh elections held in Pakistan on February 08 last year. He vacated his Sindh Assembly seat from Karachi, citing discrepancies in the vote count that favored his opponent. He emphasized the importance of a fair and just electoral process.

### LHC grants permission for Aurat March

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has granted permission for the Aurat March, scheduled for February 12, following petitions filed by activist Leena Ghani and others. The hearing, presided over by Justice Anwar Hussain, saw the government's legal representative submit a letter confirming security arrangements for the event. The court instructed authorities to ensure comprehensive security measures for the participants. The organisers had filed a contempt petition against Lahore Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza and other officials for failing to process their request in a timely manner. The petitioners, including prominent activists Khawar Mumtaz, Leena Ghani, Neelam Hussain, Fatima Jan, and Sher-een-Umar, had approached the Lahore High Court after their application for the march, submitted in January, had not been acted upon.

# Pakistan and Maldives pledge to strengthen bilateral defence ties

## Chief of Defence Force Maldives called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Defence Force Maldives, Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The visiting dignitary will also participate in AMAN Dialogue, being conducted alongside the multinational maritime exercise AMAN-25. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, including bilateral collaboration and regional security, were discussed. Major General Ibrahim Hilmy appreciated and acknowledged Pakistan Navy's efforts and commitment to promote collaborative maritime security in the region. Both leaders pledged to further strengthen and expand the scope of existing bilateral defence relationship. The Chief of the Naval Staff expressed his gratitude for participation of the Chief of Defence Force Maldives in AMAN Dialogue. He emphasized that the Dialogue will serve as a valuable platform for fostering comprehensive discussions on maritime security challenges and opportunities. The visit of the Chief of Defence Force Maldives is expected to further enhance bilateral collaboration between the two countries.

## Pakistan, Uzbekistan vow to promote peace

DNA

TASHKENT: Pakistan and Uzbekistan held the 3rd Round of Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) on 5 February 2025 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Pakistan delegation was led by the Additional Foreign Secretary, Syed Ali AsadGillani, while the Uzbek delegation was led by Mr. AloyevBakhromjon-Juraboyevich, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation across a wide range of areas, including political and inter-parliamentary relations, as well as collaboration in the sectors of economy, energy, trade, investment, education, culture, information technology, and tourism. During the consultations, key regional and international developments were discussed, with both countries reiterating their shared resolve to promote peace, stability, and development in the region. Enhanced collaboration through international and regional platforms was emphasized. Expressing satisfaction at the upward trajectory of bilateral relations, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintain the momentum and collaborate closely on all issues of mutual interests.

## Imran's letter 'shaken' ruling' party

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: PTI claims that a letter written by Imran Khan to the army chief has unsettled government officials, and drawn strong reactions from the governing coalition. Without referring to the army chief, Barrister Dr Muhammad Ali Saif, spokesperson for the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government, alleged that the letter had created panic within the federal government, though he did not name any specific officials. He claimed that ministers from the "fake government" had launched propaganda even before the letter reached its intended recipients. "The ruling party's leaders have lost sleep over Imran Khan's letter," Saif said in statement, adding that senior Pakistan Muislim League - Nawaz (PML-N) figures were "visibly disturbed."

## IAEA Chief to visit Pakistan next week

DG IAEA Rafael Mariano Grossi to meet PM and Deputy PM/Foreign Minister

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: At the invitation of the Government of Pakistan, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, will undertake an official visit to Pakistan next week. During his visit, DG IAEA will call on the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister. He will also participate in seminars at Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) and the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). He would also visit INMOL Hospital in Lahore and Chashma Nuclear Power Generating Station (CNPGS). Pakistan and IAEA have long standing cooperation that dates back to 1957. Pakistan is currently member of the Board of Governors of the IAEA. The DG routinely visits IAEA member states to outreach on peaceful uses of nuclear technology. As part of this outreach, his visit reaffirms Pakistan's deepening partnership with the IAEA on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology aimed at fostering socio-economic development of the country.

## South Africa ignores US G 20 snub

DNA

PRETORIA: South African Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola on Thursday reaffirmed the country's commitment to human dignity, equality, and democratic values, emphasising its independent stance in global affairs. South Africa is "championing non-racism and non-sexism while placing our constitution and the rule of law at the forefront," Lamola said on X. His remarks came after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced he would not attend the upcoming G20 summit in Johannesburg. Rubio accused South Africa of expropriating private property and using its G20 presidency to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives alongside climate policies. South Africa defends land policies, global leadership Lamola defended the country's recently adopted Expropriation Act, saying it is "similar to the Eminent domain laws" and ensures private property is not arbitrarily seized. He stressed that South Africa's G20 presidency prioritizes more than just climate change, aiming to secure fair treatment for Global South nations and establish a more equitable global system. "We remain committed to engaging the government of the USA," he added. Separately, South Africa's presidency said on X: "By settling land claims, we are working to correct the injustices of the past and provide fair opportunities for all South Africans."

## JCP approves 9 LHC additional judges

The Lahore High Court has a total of 60 judge positions, but until now, only 34 judges were serving

COURT REPORTER

LAHORE: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Thursday approved nine names for the position of additional judges at the Lahore High Court. The meeting, chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi, reviewed the nominations for the high court appointments. The approved candidates are Hasan Nawaz Makhdoom, Malik Waqar Haider Awan, Sardar Akbar Ali Dogar, Malik Javed Iqbal Wains, Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi, Muhammad Jawad Zafar, Khalid Ishaq, and Sultan Mahmood. Additionally, 16 more vacancies will be filled in phases. The Lahore High Court has a total of 60 judge positions, but until now, only 34 judges were serving, leaving 26 positions vacant. The last time judges were appointed was on May 7, 2021, when 13 lawyers were inducted. Since then, no new judges had been appointed, leading to a backlog of pending cases and delays in justice. Several previous chief justices attempted to fill the vacancies, but objections from senior Supreme Court judges hindered the appointments. After assuming office, Lahore High Court

Chief Justice Aalia Neelum prioritised filling these vacancies. She conducted interviews to ensure the selection of competent, honest, and capable lawyers. Legal experts have lauded Chief Justice Aalia Neelum for ensuring a transparent selection process. Senior lawyer Ahsan Bhoon said that the appointed judges are highly competent and reputable. Supreme Court Advocate Chaudhry Naseer Kamboh praised her for strengthening the system through merit-based appointments. Further names under review include Nawazish Ali Peerzada, Sajid Khan Tanoli, Saqib Jilani, Muhammad Zubair Khalid, Manwarul Salam, Muqtadar Akhtar Shabbir, Mushtaq Ahmed, Najaf Muzammil Khan, Naveed Ahmed Khawaja, Qadir Bakhsh, Qasim Ali Chohan, Rafi Zeeshan, Javed Altaf, Rana Shamsah Khan, Rizwan Akhtar Awan, and Sabahat Rizvi. The meeting will also consider the final nominations of Salman Ahmed, Samia Khalid, Sardar Akbar Ali, Shaigun Ijaz, Syed Ahsan Raza Kazmi, Intikhab Hussain Shah, and Usman Akram Sahi. The Judicial Commission's decision on the appointments will play a significant role in shaping the future of the Lahore High Court's judicial capacity.



BEIJING: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Li Qiang, at the Great Hall of the People. - DNA

## Saudi prince Turki condemns Trump's 'ethnic cleansing plan'

Warns US leader will receive 'an earful' from Saudi leadership if he visits Kingdom

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Donald Trump's plan for the US to take control of Gaza and force Palestinians to leave the enclave would be "ethnic cleansing" that would spark conflict and bloodshed, Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's former ambassador in Washington, said on Wednesday. In an interview with an American TV channel, Prince Turki, who is also a former head of the Kingdom's intelligence services, angrily rejected the US president's comments, which included a threat to send US troops to help turn Gaza into the "Riviera of the Middle East." Prince Turki said he expected Arab and Muslim countries, along with other nations and Europe, to take up the issue at the UN to show that the world opposed "this mad ethnic cleansing plan." "It is a fantasy to think that ethnic cleansing in the 21st century can be condoned by a world community that stays on its behind, and does not respond to that," Prince Turki told presenter Christiane Amanpour. "The problem in Palestine is not the Palestinians. It is the Israeli occupation. And this has been clear and understood by everybody," Prince Turki said Trump's comments

upended previous US policy that favored a two-state solution based on land for peace. He said Trump's plan was based on the position of Israeli extremist politician Itamar Ben-Gvir, "the ultimate ethnic cleanser," who recently resigned as national security minister over the Gaza ceasefire. Trump's words were a "total acceptance of the Israeli position by the American government," Prince Turki said, adding that this approach had been gaining support in US political circles over the past two years. Prince Turki said that if Trump visited Saudi Arabia, he is likely to receive "an earful" from the Saudi leadership about "not just the wisdom of what he is proposing, but the downright unfairness and injustice." Trump has had close relations with Saudi Arabia and made the Kingdom his first foreign visit during his first term. Prince Turki said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had pledged last month to invest \$600 billion in the US. Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry strongly condemned threats to displace Palestinians from their land and reiterated the Kingdom's position that there would be no normalization of relations with Israel until the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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