



Islamabad POST

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Trump signs order imposing sanctions on Int'l Criminal Court

Detailed News On Page-08

Pak plans to review Qatar LNG contract

Detailed News On Page-08

Australian HC inaugurates AFL Girls Tournament

Detailed News On Page-06

In letter to CJP

4 judges oppose appointment of new judges to SC

The judges warned that proceeding with new judicial appointments under the current circumstances could create the impression of court packing, a practice where appointments are made to influence judicial outcomes

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Four senior judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan have written a letter to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi, requesting him to postpone the appointment of new judges amid ongoing legal and constitutional challenges. The letter, signed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Ayesha Malik, and Justice Athar Minallah, highlights concerns regarding the pending petitions against the 26th Constitutional Amendment and the seniority dispute of judges in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). According to the letter, a constitutional bench hearing the 26th Amendment case may recommend the formation of a full court to deliberate on the matter. However, appointing new judges before a decision is made could create complications regarding the composition of the full court. The judges also questioned the seniority adjustment of IHC judges, stating that three judges were transferred to the Islamabad High Court but did not retake their oaths, as required by the Constitution. The letter claims that without the oath-taking, their judicial status remains uncertain, yet their seniority ranking has been altered. The judges warned that proceeding with new judicial appointments under the current circumstances could create impression of court packing, a practice where appointments are made to influence judicial outcomes.

The letter explicitly asks:

- Why is the court being put in this situation?
- On whose agenda and in whose interests is this being done?

The judges have urged the chief justice of Pakistan to delay the judicial appointments until:

1. A decision is made on the 26th Constitutional Amendment.
2. The full court application in the constitutional bench is decided.
3. The seniority dispute of Islamabad High Court judges is settled.

A copy of the letter was also sent to all members of the Judicial Commission.

Government offers fresh talks to PTI

NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq says negotiations have never been off the table

DNA

LAHORE: The government has extended a fresh invitation for negotiations to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), with National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq emphasising that the doors for talks had never been closed. Speaking informally to journalists at the Punjab Assembly, Sadiq clarified that the government has always been open to negotiations with PTI, adding that the committee tasked with handling talks has not been disbanded, Express News reported. He explained that the ball is in PTI's court to seek internal approval for talks, after which the government would be ready to engage. Sadiq reassured the media that the government's communication with PTI remains intact. "We have not severed ties with PTI, and they are still in contact with us," he stated. He also acknowledged the leadership of PTI, particularly Imran Khan, calling him a "tough individual" and acknowledging the complexities in engaging with the opposition. Last week, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and former premier Imran Khan simultaneously swung into

Continued on Page 06



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets the Pakistan Cricket Team players at the inauguration of the renovated Qaddafi Stadium in Lahore. - DNA

Security forces kill three terrorists

Terrorists attempted to escape by wearing burqa, says military's media wing

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: At least three terrorists were killed on Friday during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the North Waziristan district, said a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The military's media wing added that the terrorists were attempting to escape wearing women's attire (burqa) when they were engaged by security forces. The IBO was conducted on the night of February 6 and 7 in the general area of Datta Khel on reported presence of terrorists. "During the conduct of the operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location as a result of which three khwarij were sent to hell, who were trying to

Continued on Page 06

Premier hopes for team's victory

PM inaugurates newly renovated Gaddafi Stadium

Gaddafi Stadium will be venue for matches of Champions Trophy and tri-nation ODI series

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Days before the start of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inaugurated the newly renovated Gaddafi Stadium on Friday, marking a new chapter in the iconic cricket stadium's 65-year history. The premier appreciated Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, contractors and workers for completing renovation work of Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium in "almost impossible" record period of 117 days. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, he asked Naqvi to appreciate the workers who participated in the renovation work of the stadium by taking them to London visit. He also lauded Pakistani

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Electricity tariff to be reduced for consumers: PM

PM calls for grant-based financial assistance for developing nations to tackle climate crisis

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that electricity tariff will further be reduced for domestic consumers and industries through reforms in the electricity sector. Chairing a review meeting regarding power sector in Islamabad on Friday,

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Briefs

Bilawal calls inter-faith unity

Bilawal says religion 'doesn't divide us, it unites us'

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari emphasised the need to strengthen public ties between Pakistan and the United States, asserting that religion is a unifying rather than a divisive force. Speaking to the media after attending the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, Bilawal described the event as an excellent opportunity for interfaith harmony. He noted the presence of US President Donald Trump, who delivered a speech, and highlighted that people from across the world gathered at the event. Bilawal himself addressed the closing ceremony, where he underscored the power of faith to bring people together.

PTI says rally 'only in Swabi'

Protests to also take place at tehsil and union council levels, says party's top leader

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has announced that it will not engage in any confrontation or unrest on February 8, marking the first anniversary of last year's general elections. PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja told media in Islamabad that the party would hold a rally only in Swabi, while protests would take place at tehsil and union council levels. He clarified that there were no plans for confrontation or chaos.

Maldives CDF calls on COAS

Pakistan, Maldives vow to strengthen defence coop

Major General Hilmy lauded the Pakistan Army for its exceptional professionalism, dedication, and contributions to regional stability



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan and Maldives have agreed to further strengthening and revitalising bilateral defence ties, a military statement said on Friday. According to the Pakistan military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) of the Maldives

Armed Forces, called on Pakistan Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on General Syed Asim Munir, at the General Headquarters. "During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, including bilateral defence cooperation and regional security dynamics, were discussed in detail," said an ISPR press release. It said that both sides expressed satisfaction over the enduring bonds of

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9th maritime exercise AMAN-2025 kicks off

Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, underscored Pakistan Navy's contributions toward collaborative maritime security

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: An impressive and colourful flag-hoisting ceremony was held at Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi, marking the formal inauguration of the 9th Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN 2025. The event featured the simultaneous hoisting of flags from all participating nations. A large number of senior military representatives, observers, diplomats, and officials from Pakistan Armed Forces attended the ceremony. The message of Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, was read during the ceremony. In his message, the Naval Chief warmly welcomed the participants of Exercise AMAN-25 and highlighted that the exercise has become a regular feature, bringing together regional and extra-regional navies to foster a secure and conducive maritime environment. He emphasized Pakistan Navy's role as a key stakeholder in the

Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber concludes Oman visit

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force concluded a successful visit to Sultanate of Oman, where he engaged in fruitful discussions with the civil and military leadership. The Air Chief was received with full military honors, underscoring the importance of the visit in enhancing bilateral relations. In these meetings, Chief of the Air Staff called on General Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office of Oman, Air Vice Marshal Khamis Hammad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman,

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Movlamov stresses for increasing CARs, Pak regional coop

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan, Atadjan Movlamov has stressed the need for increasing Central Asian States (CARs) and Pakistan regional Cooperation through has huge potential to further develop regional cooperation. "I would like to emphasize that with the personal contributions and attentions of the leaders of regional countries, with the continuous efforts and assistance of diplomats, we will further enhance Regional Cooperation via dialogue, bringing more understanding, exploring pathways to effectively implement the huge cooperation potential of the regional countries and peoples," he said. Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan, Atadjan Movlamov said this while addressing the "Central Asia - Pakistan - Azerbaijan Ambassadorial Dialogue of 2025 on Regional Connectivity," organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS). "We will create a peaceful and prosperous tomorrow for our people and make tireless efforts to meet the dreams of the people of regional countries." As we can see from the Concept note provided to us by the IRS, the first pillar of Pakistan's "Vision Central Asia is Enhancing Political and Diplomatic Ties" and this topic is important also for all Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan. He said that taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to recall the philosophy of new international relations "Dialogue is a guarantee of peace", declared by the National Leader of the Turkmen People, Chairman of the Halk Maslahaty of Turkmenistan, Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

He said that today our common and important task for our joint future should be the timely and effective integration of the countries of the region, using existing geopolitical advantages for strengthening political and economic ties, formation of new transport and transit corridors and energy routes. Turkmenistan considers the development of cooperation in the transport and energy sectors as one of the most important priorities of its foreign policy and it is not only on regional but on global dimensions also, he said. The Ambassador said that Turkmenistan works closely with the United Nations and regularly makes constructive proposals to promote peace, energy, transport, and environmental safety from the UN's high roster. Turkmenistan initiated the resolutions of the UN General Assembly "On reliable and stable energy transit and its role in achieving sustainable development" he said. He said that on the development of multi-model modes of transport to achieve sustainable development goals", as well as a number of high-level multilateral dialogues in the fields of energy, transport, ecology, and environmental protection. Talking about the practical implementation of Turkmenistan's foreign policy and initiatives, he shared several major infrastructure projects that have been launched in recent years by Turkmenistan. He said that in January 2021 the railway section between the Aqina-Andkhai stations of Afghanistan was inaugurated and the Commissioning of the 500 kV power transmission line along the Kerki (Turkmenistan) - Sheberghan

(Afghanistan) route was also initiated. He said that international fibre-optic communication lines and transit flows on routes Ynamnazar (Turkmenistan) and Aqina (Afghanistan) and Serhetabat (Turkmenistan) - Torghundi (Afghanistan) were also installed. In September 2024, the Serhetabat-Herat section, of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Transnational Gas Pipeline (TAPI) was also launched. He said that Turkmenistan pays special attention to enhancing transport and transit communication along East-West and North-South lines. He said the construction of these major infrastructure projects like the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, as well as TAP, power transmission line and fibre-optic line along the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan route and roads and railway connections from Turkmenistan and Central Asian countries to Pakistan with the participation of regional states opens up great prospects for cooperation, attracting major foreign investments, solving many important social problems. The envoy said that the prospect of these projects for Pakistan is simply huge, as supplied natural gas, clean electricity, and fibre-optic communication lines will boost the growth of industry and other sectors of the national economy in Pakistan. In addition to providing clean natural gas and electricity, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the environment, the commissioning of the above facilities will create tens of thousands of additional jobs in Pakistan and will improve the well-being of people, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar.

Experts call for building climate resilience

ISLAMABAD: The second day of the Breathe Pakistan conference unfolded on Friday with a renewed sense of urgency as experts, policymakers, and industry leaders gathered to tackle the country's deepening climate crisis. With Pakistan facing extreme weather, water scarcity, and environmental degradation, speakers called for immediate, concrete action to build climate resilience. Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, set the tone for the discussions, declaring that Pakistan is at a defining moment in its climate journey. "Pakistan is on the frontlines of climate change, paying the price for a crisis created by others," she said, citing the devastating floods as a wake-up call. However, she insisted that the country must not remain a passive victim but an active force in shaping solutions. A major point of discussion was Pakistan's updated Electric Vehicle (EV) policy, with Parliamentary Secretary Wajeeha Qamar unveiling new incentives to promote clean transportation and curb emissions. Meanwhile, Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb announced a Rs100 billion allocation for climate resilience projects and Rs10 billion for smog mitigation in Punjab.—APP

Shuichi, Tarar discuss strengthening bilateral ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi on Friday called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar to discuss issues pertaining to strengthen bilateral relations. The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Japan. During the discussion, both sides emphasized the long-standing friendly relations between the peoples of Pakistan and Japan. The Federal Minister acknowledged Japan's support in Pakistan's economic and industrial development and expressed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen cooperation with Japan. Ambassador AKAMATSU reiterated Japan's commit-

ment to supporting Pakistan's development goals and agreed to enhance collaboration in various sectors. He also highlighted the completion of 70 years of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) between Japan and Pakistan and reaffirmed Japan's willingness to continue its partnership in Pakistan's progress. Both sides exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and agreed to further expand bilateral relations for the benefit of both nations. He emphasized the significance of the exercise in enhancing interoperability among participants and sought their cooperation in achieving the exercise's objectives. He praised the participating countries for supporting Pakistan's commitment to peace and maritime security and acknowledged the fluttering flags of partici-

pating nations as a true embodiment of the Exercise AMAN motto - 'Together for Peace.' He expressed hope that the friendships fostered during the exercise would continue to grow. AMAN 2025 is the 9th edition of the series and is being held from 7-11 February 2025. Around 60 countries, along with their ships, aircraft, special operations forces, and observers, are participating in the exercise. Additionally, the Pakistan Navy has introduced the inaugural AMAN Dialogue, scheduled for 9-10 February 2025, as an adjunct to the exercise. During this dialogue, naval chiefs and senior representatives from participating countries will deliberate on maritime security challenges and explore innovative solutions to enhance security at sea.

Pakistani artist performs Turkish music in Iran

ISLAMABAD: In a remarkable celebration of cultural harmony, Muhammad Huzaifa, a young Pakistani student, musician, and writer, was honored at an event hosted by the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI), the cultural arm of the ten-member Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The event, held in Tehran, showcased Huzaifa's multifaceted talents, including his performance on the Baglama, a traditional Turkish musical instrument, and the presentation of his published essay, "Excavating A Forgotten Treasure from Türkiye". The essay recounts his journey to locate the burial site of the renowned Arab poet Imru' al-Qais in Ankara, Turkey, said a press release received here on Friday. The gathering highlighted the ECI's mission to foster cultural and intellectual exchange among ECO member nations. Huzaifa's performance, which blended Pakistani, Turkish, and Iranian cultural elements, was a centerpiece of the event. His ability to master the Baglama and perform it before an Iranian audience in Tehran was hailed as a symbol of unity and shared heritage. Dr. Saad S. Khan, President of the ECI and a distinguished Pakistani diplomat, historian, and music expert, praised Huzaifa's achievements. "A Pakistani boy performing a Turkish instrument before an Iranian audience in Tehran is a testament to the power of cultural diplomacy," Dr. Khan remarked. "This event underscores the ECI's commitment to bringing nations together through the arts, history, and literature." Young Pakistani artist performs Turkish music in Iran, highlighting cultural unity.—APP

Gilani calls youth to take lead of Green Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday urged the youth to take lead of the Green Pakistan initiative through research, advocacy and innovation to ensure inclusive climate resilience at the national level. In his keynote address at the closing session of Breathe Pakistan International Climate Change Conference, the acting president reaffirmed the country's commitment to address gravest challenges of climate change. He said that Pakistan had endured devastating floods, droughts and glacier melting causing floods due to climate change despite its least share to the global carbon emissions.

"Climate Change is a living reality. Pakistan needs support for technology transfer and capacity building to ensure climate resilience," he said. Acting President Gilani mentioned that Pakistan had taken indigenous steps to contain climate change impacts on the region mainly renewable energy (RE) adoption like solar and hydropower projects to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The country, he said was also exploring climate finance and carbon markets to mobilize climate finance. He underscored that early warning systems and disaster management frameworks were critical to protect communities. The government, he said

was holding dialogue with communities, provincial governments and development partners to ensure improved and holistic climate. He added that fight against climate change was not possible without global support and global commitment for international climate finance was critical to ensure access of least developed nations to climate finance for adaptation and mitigation. "We need to equip the young change makers with skills, technology and knowledge to lead community level climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Climate action is a movement that demands relentless commitment and devotion," he said.—DNA

9th multinational maritime exercise AMAN-2025 kicks off

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regional and extra-regional navies to foster a secure

stability at sea, AMAN Dialogue has been introduced

objectives. He praised the participating countries for



and conducive maritime environment. He emphasized the Pakistan Navy's role as a key stakeholder in the Arabian Sea and its initiatives to enhance regional maritime security, including Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP). The chief said that in recognition of the international community's trust in the Pakistan Navy's efforts to promote peace and

as an adjunct to the exercise. Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, underscored the Pakistan Navy's contributions toward collaborative maritime security. He emphasized the significance of the exercise in enhancing interoperability among participants and sought their cooperation in achieving the exercise's

supporting Pakistan's commitment to peace and maritime security and acknowledged the fluttering flags of participating nations as a true embodiment of the Exercise AMAN motto - 'Together for Peace.' He expressed hope that the friendships fostered during the exercise would continue to grow. AMAN 2025 is the 9th edition of the series.—DNA

Foreign Secretary reaffirms abiding support for Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Seminar in commemoration of the Kashmir Solidarity Day, Titled "Kashmir Solidarity Day: A Commitment to Peace, Rights and Self-Determination", the event included inauguration of the 'Kashmir Resource Centre' - a first-of-its-kind at a national think-tank. Ambassador Amna Baloch, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, was the chief guest on the occasion. Expressing her views, the Foreign Secretary said the Kashmiri people have not been able to exercise their fundamental right of self-determination due to continued Indian intransigence. Today, the true rep-

resentatives of the Kashmiri people remain behind bars, with the total number of political prisoners being in the thousands. Iconic Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani died during detention. As if the imprisonment of popular leaders was not enough, the Indian authorities have been banning the political parties that represent the true aspirations of the Kashmiri people. So far, 14 political parties have been outlawed. History bears witness that India's continued occupation of large parts of Jammu and Kashmir has threatened regional peace and stability on a number of occasions. The Foreign Secretary stressed that Pakistan believes in peaceful co-existence with its neighbours. However, a

peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people, is essential for lasting peace in South Asia. The Foreign Secretary commended the ISSI for establishing a much-needed 'Kashmir Resource Centre' and expressed her hope that this Centre will offer a useful repository of knowledge for researchers, practitioners and lay readers alike. Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, said that while Pakistan and the Kashmiris remain resolute in their quest for a solution based on the Security Council resolutions, India has long reneged on its solemn

commitments. The international community hesitates to play its rightful role, either because of geo-strategic considerations or corporate interests. Meanwhile, India's conduct in the occupied territories is marked by heartless cruelty and repression, political manipulation, demographic engineering, and an onslaught of misinformation and disinformation. In order to deceive the world community and secure legitimacy for its crimes, India has been trying to paint the legitimate Kashmiri resistance struggle as "terrorism", leveling allegations of "cross-border terrorism" against Pakistan, and projecting a false sense of 'normalcy' in IIOJK since 5 August 2019. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed

that for the Kashmiris and the people of Pakistan, it is imperative to reject any narratives of despair and to keep faith in the prospects of a fair settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. While highlighting the importance of the newly-established Kashmir Resource Centre (KRC) at ISSI, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood hoped that it will play a meaningful part in creating increased awareness and understanding and promote informed discourse, particularly among the youth of Pakistan about this most intractable of global issues from the last century. He also thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its support in the establishment of KRC.—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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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



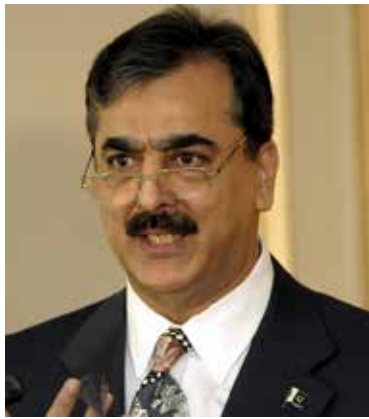
ISLAMABAD: Piece of art displayed on the occasion of the National Day of Iran held at Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

Gilani calls youth to take lead of 'Green Pakistan'

"Climate Change is a living reality. Pakistan needs support for technology transfer and capacity building to ensure climate resilience," he said

STAFF REPORT

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dialogue with communities, provincial governments and development partners to ensure improved and holistic climate action. He added that fight against climate change was not possible without global support and global commitment for international climate finance was critical to ensure access of least developed nations to climate finance for adaptation and mitigation. "We need to equip the young change makers with skills, technology and knowledge to lead community level climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Climate action is a movement that demands relentless commitment and devotion," he said. Aban Marker Kabraje of UNEP said the speakers and experts rendered quality discourse, subject matter and knowledge in their speeches and ad-

resses. The interventions were rich full of enormous information required to address climate change, she added. Folerance Roll, FAO Country Head presented the outcomes of the Breathe Pakistan Conference.

The conference provided a great opportunity to showcase how media can lead climate action, she said, adding, "The first outcome is on key aspect that climate change affects all aspects and components of society and multi sectoral and multidisciplinary action to address, encourage federal and provincial governments to join resources to address it." She added that climate finance was the second important outcome and demanded Pakistan to mobilize international agenda on climate finance and enhance it's capacities of accessing climate finance.

The living Indus Initiative was a national project that addressed all provinces and the government was addressing it, she mentioned.

The Conference outcomes underlined that the fourth outcome was about women and girls who were the most affected due to climate change and look forward for specific measures to address specific strategy to address resilience building of women and girls. It also demanded transformation of agriculture food system to enhance quality and nutrition of food, and improve tree cover that have huge potential to mitigate and transform climate change impacts.

Uzbek-Pak significant strategic partners, bound by historical economic ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtayev has said that Uzbekistan and Pakistan are two significant strategic partners, bound by centuries-old historical, cultural, and economic ties. Several key intergovernmental agreements have been signed between our countries, including the Preferential Trade Agreement, the Transit Trade Agreement (PTA), as well as the Roadmap for increasing bilateral trade to \$1 billion, the Ambassador said. Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtayev said this while addressing the "Central Asia- Pakistan- Azerbaijan Ambassadorial Dialogue of 2025 on Regional Connectivity," organized by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, the other day. The volume of mutual trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan in 2024 amounted to \$ 404.5 million, he said. Uzbek envoy said that Pakistan plays a role as a natural gateway to South Asia for Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. Alisher Tukhtayev said that with access to the sea and a well-developed port infrastructure, Pakistan can serve as a crucial link, facilitating access for our region to international trade routes and global markets. The Ambassador said that despite the long-standing tradition of cooperation, transport connectivity between our countries remains underdeveloped, limiting the full potential of trade, economic collaboration, and people-to-people exchanges. He said "Improving Land, Rail and Air Connectivity between Uzbekistan and Pakistan to Bolster Economic and Cultural Relations". A key strategic task before us today is the development of efficient, secure, and modern transport and logistics corridors, which will not only enhance economic integration but also foster deeper intercultural dialogue and strengthen bilateral cooperation, he said. The Ambassador said that joint efforts in this direction will significantly enhance the competitiveness of our economies, improve the investment climate, and contribute to the sustainable development of the entire region. He said that one of the most important projects with strategic significance for expanding transport connectivity between Central and South Asia is the Trans-Afghan Railway Corridor.

Conference to mark 'new chapter in regional collaboration'

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan Friday said that the First Joint CPA Asia and South-East Asia Regional Conference, scheduled for February 6-10, would mark the beginning of a new chapter in regional collaboration. In an exclusive interview with PTV, the Speaker explained that the conference aims to strengthen regional ties, promote cultural understanding and facilitate the exchange of ideas among participating nations. Speaker noted that the conference will feature interactive sessions, panel discussions and presentations, providing a comprehensive platform for parliamentarians to engage in meaningful dialogue and knowledge-sharing. This conference will provide a unique platform for parliamentarians from these countries to engage in constructive dialogue, share experiences and explore avenues for cooperation, he said.—APP

Experts highlight regional connectivity, cooperation at CAPA dialogue

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad (IRSI), led by President Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, has organized a roundtable discussion titled '2025 Central Asia/Pakistan/Azerbaijan (CAPA) Ambassadorial Dialogue on Regional Connectivity' here the other day. The event brought together ambassadors from four Central Asian states and Azerbaijan, with Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed as the chief guest and keynote speaker, according to a press release issued. The dialogue featured prominent speakers, including H.E. Mr. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan; H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan; H.E. Mr. Sharifzoda Yusuf, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan; H.E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps; and H.E. Mr. Alisher Tukhtayev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan. Discussions and insights centered on how Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Central Asian states share a decades-long, cultural, religious and linguistic relationship anchored in mutual trust.—APP

Rana stresses dialogue as key to resolving issues

ISLAMABAD: PM's political Advisor Rana Sanaullah Friday emphasized that opposition parties should prioritize dialogue over chaos, expressing hope that united opposition parties will maturely adopt a reconciliatory approach and engage in constructive discussions. In an exclusive conversation with a private news channel, Rana Sanaullah expressed unwavering confidence that the united opposition will demonstrate unparalleled political maturity, steadfastly upholding democratic values. He firmly believes that stalwarts like Maulana and other seasoned politicians aligned with PTI will unequivocally prioritize dialogue over destructive chaos, thereby ensuring stability in the nation. "Personally, I believe that with the involvement of these mature politicians, the government will be able to achieve fruitful results from the talks, making the reconciliation process smoother," he added. Responding to a query about JUI-F Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, he clarified that "we have not forgotten our friends and Maulana was a priority in the 26th Constitutional Amendment. We will sit down again and resolve issues through dialogue." "Maulana is a patriot and a loyal citizen of this country, he admired, adding that he will never resort to anti-state activities or work against the interests of Pakistan.—APP

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Briefs

ANF recovers over 96 kg drugs in 6 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 6 operations recovered over 96 kg drugs worth over Rs 9.8 million and arrested 8 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that 2,007 kg ice hidden in the trolley bag of a passenger going to Bahrain was recovered at Peshawar International Airport. 52.8 kg hashish hidden in a car near Amangarh in Nowshera and 2 suspects were arrested. 16.8 kg opium was recovered from the secret cavities of a car intercepted near Ferozwala in Sheikhpura and a suspect was arrested. 12 kg hashish was recovered from a car near Chenab Toll Plaza GT Road Gujrat and 2 suspects were rounded up. In 5th operation, 9.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of the suspect near a hotel on the National Highway Hyderabad. —APP

Tanveer chairs meeting to review sugar production, demand

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Friday chaired the Sugar Advisory Board meeting to review the production and demand of sugar in the country. The meeting was attended by Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Rashid Mahmood Langrial and other senior officials, said a news release. The minister emphasized the need for a joint policy between federal and provincial governments to ensure stable sugar prices and availability and all stakeholders would be taken on board in this regard. It was decided to convene another meeting on Monday to finalize prices for Ramadan, ensuring that sugar prices remain stable during the holy month, not face any difficulties. —APP

AIOU sets Feb 10 as deadline for Matric, Inter and B.Ed admissions

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) had set February 10 as late date for admissions in Matric, Intermediate, and B.Ed programs offered for the Spring 2025 semester. According to the details, no decision had been made yet regarding an extension of the admission deadline. Therefore, interested students were advised to take advantage of the opportunity and register themselves within the given timeframe. Admissions for Associate Degree (BA/B.Com), BS, Postgraduate Diplomas, MS, MPhil, and PhD programs would remain open until 17th February. According to the issued schedule, continuing students could enroll themselves until 24th February. Admission forms and prospectuses for all programs were available on the university's website. To facilitate students, an online admission facility had been provided for all programs. —APP

Romina urges stronger climate action, investment in green solutions

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam has underscored the urgent need for investment in green solutions, climate education, and empowering youth to lead the way in building a sustainable future. In her remarks at Breathe Pakistan Climate Conference on Friday, PM's aide called on the policymakers, businesses, civil society, and individuals to unite in the battle against climate change, emphasizing Pakistan's vulnerable position in the face of the global climate crisis. "Pakistan finds itself at the frontline of the global climate crisis. Despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions, we remain one of the most climate-vulnerable nations in the world," she said. Romina highlighted that the impacts of climate change, from catastrophic floods to prolonged droughts, are no



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Mukhtar Ahmed cut the ribbon to inaugurate exhibition at "Islamabad Art Gallery" Sector F-9 in Federal Capital.

CDA, FPCCI hold meeting to discuss important issues

President FPCCI further said that the business community is ready to provide all kinds of support to make Islamabad the most beautiful city. We are hopeful that CDA chief to play his role in solving business community's issues

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI, President ECOCCI and Vice President Kasi chaired the important meeting of Islamabad business community and CDA was held yesterday at FPCCI President Secretariat Islamabad. In the meeting, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa took special part in the meeting along with his team. In the meeting, issues related to CDA and district administration were discussed with the business community of Islamabad. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President of FPCCI while addressing the meeting said that the business community of Islamabad is suffering from many problems. An important role can also be played in affordable housing in Islamabad. He said that incentives should be given to the business community regarding housing projects and construction work. Stakeholders should be included in the design review committee as in the past.

President FPCCI further said that the business community is ready to provide all kinds of support to make Islamabad the most beautiful city. We are hopeful that Chairman CDA will play his role in solving the problems of the business community. He said that the best arrangements were made in the meeting of Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The infrastructure of Islamabad has improved, for which we congratulate Chairman CDA.

On this occasion, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that the business community is the backbone of any economy, the commercial center and zone that will earn the most will also spend the most. Taxes will be reduced if the business community itself bears the costs of the construction works of the commercial centers. We will invite President FPCCI Atif Ikram and President ICCI Nasir Qureshi to the board meeting, they will tell their problems there and solve them on priority basis. He added that CDA generates revenue from its own resources

and spends it on the citizens of Islamabad, Islamabad does not get a share from NFC. NGOs and external organizations provide funds for projects in Balochistan and other provinces. Are there any funds for Islamabad? Chairman CDA further said that it will not happen now that someone takes a plot from CDA and keeps it for years, the one who took the plot must do development work, otherwise I will blacklist him who does not have funds for development, he should do joint venture with CDA. He further said that the business community should come forward and take ownership of the city, contribute to the development works, if they think that CDA will solve all the problems, then it is not possible, for the first time we are digitizing the ICT land record. During the meeting, Chairman CDA nominated Faisal Naem Director General CDA as the focal person for solving the problems of the business community. Addressing the ceremony, Vice President of FPCCI Tariq Khan Jadoon, Chairman Capital Office, Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman

Coordination Malik Sohail Hussain, Former President FPCCI Abdul Rauf Alam, Former Vice Presidents FPCCI Mian Akram Farid, Atif Yusuf Jiwa, Ijaz Abbasi, Chairman Founder Group Islamabad Chamber Tariq Sadiq, and President Islamabad Chamber Nasir Qureshi, Advisor President FPCCI Sheikh Pervaiz Ahmed, Ahmed Chinoy and others expressed their views and said that the business community is playing an important role in economic improvement. The business community of Islamabad has been paying more taxes for the last two or three years. If the situation continues, the business community will also leave Pakistan. In the last five years unemployment in the country has not decreased, the cost of doing business in the country has increased by 190%. Pakistan imports steel scrap worth billions of dollars. The meeting was attended by people from the chambers, associations, real estate, construction and other sectors of Islamabad, Engineer Azhar Salam, Mehmood Waraich, Chaudhry Naseer and others.

CCP approves shares' acquisition of GH2 Industries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition of 50 percent shareholding in GH2 Industries (Private) Limited (GIPL) by Descon Holding (Private) Limited (DHPL) and Aurelius (Private) Limited (APL) under a Share Sale and Purchase Agreement. The relevant product market identified for competition assessment includes rice and its derivatives—such as Basmati, Non-Basmati, Broken Rice, Rice Bran, Stabilized Rice Bran and Rice Husk—as well as rice-

based starches, including Sorbitol, Dextrose Monohydrate, Dextrose Anhydrous and Rice Protein. Following a comprehensive Phase I review, the CCP determined that the transaction does not pose any immediate threat to market competition or contribute to market concentration. Since GIPL has yet to commence operations, its potential impact on the competitive landscape remains undetermined. The assessment ensures that market dynamics remain fair and competitive while fostering investment in the agribusiness sector. Descon Holding (Private) Limited (DHPL) is a pri-

vately incorporated entity in Pakistan, specializing in share investments and offering advisory and consultancy services in management, production, marketing and engineering across local and international markets. Aurelius (Private) Limited (APL), a newly established private limited company, aims to enter the milling and trading sector for grains, including rice, wheat, sugar, cereals, pulses and spices. Meanwhile, GH2 Industries (Private) Limited (GIPL) is in the process of developing an agri-based manufacturing facility focused on producing rice, rice-based derivatives and related byproducts.

"Assad's collapse pushed Russia and Iran closer to each other"

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: "The fall of Assad in Syria was a catalyst in bringing Russia and Iran to a treaty partnership", said Dr Igor Matveev, Professor at the Department of International Business, Financial University, Moscow. He was speaking to an event related to Russia-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, held by Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad.

Dr Matveev presented Iranian version on Russian role in Syria. Iranians thought that Russia had compromised with Turkey over Syria or paved the way for negotiations with Trump over Ukraine, Dr Matveev highlighted. Iranians also believed that Russia had prioritized Libya over Syria. Dr Matveev reassured that the country is focused on advancing climate action. "We are working to strengthen regional climate collaboration and develop innovative mechanisms to institutionalize sustainable development goals," she explained. Romina concluded by praising the Breathe Pakistan initiative as a powerful symbol of collective action against climate change. "This event represents our commitment to tackling the most urgent challenge of our time. I thank conference organizers for facilitating this critical dialogue and extend my appreciation to the speakers for contributing to a transformative discussion. —DNA

Kitchen Items' prices decrease by 0.21pc

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), went down by 0.21 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 6, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 318.38 points as compared to 319.06 points during the past week. —DNA



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‘Drill, baby, drill’ vision

Amid the rumpus US President Donald Trump has created with his shock-and-awe, bull-in-a-China-shop diplomacy, his assault on already fraught efforts to contain the climate crisis is possibly the most alarming. That is perhaps a precocious claim. After all, his wrecking ball has been swung at home and threatened at places from Mexico and Canada, to Greenland and Panama, and to Gaza, which he plans to make the next “Riviera of the Middle East”. He has yet to get started on the Ukraine war or China trade war, but watch this space. But his withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement again – Joe Biden had the US rejoin the climate pact in 2021 – and his call on US fossil fuel companies to “drill baby, drill” have put the world on watch: the battle to contain a potentially catastrophic global warming just got a whole lot harder. As the Centre for American Progress puts it, Trump’s decision “disregards science, undermines years of painstaking global cooperation, harms the American economy and people, and sends a dangerous signal that the nation most responsible for the climate crisis is abandoning its moral and practical obligations”. Not that Trump cares. The US is now one of just four countries sitting aloof from global climate efforts, with Libya, Iran and Yemen. In normal times, the US might call such a peculiar group an axis of climate evil. But what harm has Trump actually done? In immediate practical terms, he has withdrawn financial support for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the objectives of which the Paris Agreement implements. Trump signs series of executive orders on first day back in White House. In the context of the trillions of dollars needed to restrain global warming, this counts for little. UNFCCC operations cost about US\$96 million a year, with the US on the hook for a fifth of this. And anyway, former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg has promised his foundation would fill this breach, as he did the last time Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement. More harmful is Trump’s likely cancellation of Biden’s climate financing pledges, the largest of which was to boost the US’ contributions to international climate funding to over US\$11 billion a year, a target just met last year. Previous commitments were just US\$1.5 billion a year on average. Already, Trump’s administration has cancelled an outstanding US\$4 billion pledged to the UN’s Green Climate Fund, out of a total of US\$6 billion which would have made the US the single largest contributor. The scale of hurt is hard to assess. There is a troubling opacity over national commitments to the United Nations’ call for climate funding and a large gap between commitments and disbursements. Governments have fallen far short in making the contributions needed to keep global warming in check and help protect poor economies from climate change. The world will need to invest US\$6.3-6.7 trillion per year in climate action by 2030, according to UN projections. Whether the US is in or out, national commitments fall miserably short of global needs and pessimism is growing. The evidence is clear. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. The past two years have been the hottest recorded. Most dramatically of all, wildfires, floods and increasingly violent storms illustrate the immediacy of the global warming threat. Funding shortages aside, the severest harm arising from Trump’s withdrawal sits elsewhere.



Gaza amid severe weather conditions

Displaced individuals in the tents of the Gaza Strip spent a difficult night under the influence of a severe winter storm, as heavy rains and strong winds caused tents to flood and some to be uprooted, exacerbating their humanitarian suffering after their homes were destroyed due to the Israeli aggression. Since the ceasefire, no new caravans or tents have been brought into the Strip except for a trickle of what is needed, leaving the displaced without sufficient protection from harsh weather conditions. Many found themselves trapped between floods and winds, worsening their humanitarian situation. In the Shati Camp in northern Gaza, citizen TaghreedAbdo reported that floods and rain closed the streets and surrounded the tents, with no rescue means available. She added, “The children are shivering from the cold, and we don’t know how we will spend the next night.” In the Attar area in the southern part of the Strip, citizen Salah Mousa mentioned that the rain washed away their tents, forcing them to spend the night outdoors under the open sky. He noted that the children are crying from the cold, with no protection from the heavy rains. This night was not an exception but reflects a tragic reality that thousands of displaced families have been living for months, amid the absence of urgent solutions to protect them from harsh weather fluctuations. As the cold spell continues, fears of new humanitarian disasters are increasing due to the scarcity of aid and the lack of appropriate alternatives for shelter. The weather conditions reveal the extent of the suffering of the displaced, as conditions worsen amid limited resources and a lack of rescue means. The complete destruction of buildings and infrastructure makes it impossible to provide the necessary assistance. The displaced taking shelter in the Mawasi area as well as in other areas of the enclave are living among the ruins of their destroyed homes and have resorted to makeshift tents made of cloth and nylon. Additionally, citizens whose homes have been destroyed are staying in streets, playgrounds, public squares, and schools, without any means to protect them from the cold and storms. For its part, the Civil Defense in Gaza confirmed that the suffering of the displaced in various areas of the Strip is escalating with the ongoing weather fluctuations accompanied by strong winds, as thousands of citizens return to their destroyed homes amid the lack of the most basic housing and shelter requirements. The Civil Defense stated in a statement on Thursday, “Our teams, as the first responders, are still unable to respond to the distress calls of the displaced in the tents and shelters.” It indicated that the current weather depression reveals the true extent of the suffering faced by citizens who have shifted from temporary displaced families to their initial displacement, whether in their homes that they found destroyed or in the tents they set up on the rubble. The Civil Defense emphasized its urgent need for rescue vehicles, large pumps, and heavy rescue equipment to drain the rainwater that has flooded areas and shelters. The Mawasi area extends from the west of Rafah city to the west of the cities of Deir al-Balah (central) and Khan Yunis (south), where citizens live in deteriorating humanitarian conditions that increase their suffering amid harsh circumstances and daily difficulties in securing essential needs.

Trump’s media defiance and bold geopolitical moves

Qamar Bashir



Trump’s strategy extends beyond media influence to leveraging the economic and military might of the United States to achieve his objectives. He has compelled countries like Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico to accept deportees, using diplomatic pressure effectively. His strong stance on the Panama Canal prompted the Panamanian government to withdraw from China’s Belt and Road Initiative and waive transition fees for American ships. Trump’s bold proposal concerning Gaza played a role in pushing both Hamas and Israel towards a ceasefire agreement

Sick and tired of the nosy, manipulative, and self-serving American media, Donald Trump is perhaps the only president in the country’s history who has had the tenacity, courage, and guts to confront the dreadful and all-powerful media head-on. He has boldly defied the influence of traditional media, demonstrating that it no longer holds the sole power to elevate or demolish any president, regardless of their power. By harnessing the power of social media, Trump has successfully shattered the long-held notion that the media controls the narrative and the fate of leaders. Unlike his predecessors, Trump is unafraid to take actions he deems necessary to expose the manipulative influence of the American media, showing no fear of potential backlash. His determination to bypass traditional media channels has revolutionized political communication. Special arrangements were even made for the direct live broadcast of President Donald J. Trump’s historic inauguration on platforms like TikTok and YouTube. This strategic move paid off as the live telecast of the inauguration ceremony set a new “All-Time Viewership Record” with 9.6 million viewers. Additionally, the live stream on President Trump’s X account garnered an impressive 36.7 million views. In total, the ceremony reached an estimated 80.7 million viewers, surpassing the previous record of 42 million set during Ronald Reagan’s inauguration in 1981. Through his innovative use of social media, Trump has stripped traditional media of its exclusive role as the primary news disseminator. He now directly reaches out to the American people and audiences worldwide, unfiltered and unmediated. For researchers and writers like me, this shift is liberating. No longer do we have to navigate the paywalls and restrictions of mainstream media outlets that prioritize profit over public access. Instead, platforms like X and TikTok offer direct, unfiltered access to Trump’s statements and updates straight from his official handles. In one of his recent posts, shared just a few hours ago on February 6, Trump exposed what he described as the manipulative misuse of taxpayer money. He claimed that billions of dollars have allegedly been misappropriated at US-AID and other agencies, with substantial sums reportedly funneled to specific media outlets as

“payoffs” for producing favorable coverage of the Democratic Party. Among those implicated, Politico is alleged to have received \$8 million, raising questions about whether other major media organizations, such as The New York Times, also benefited. This situation is being framed as potentially the largest scandal in history, with its scale and implications too significant to ignore. Critics argue that the Democrats cannot evade scrutiny over these allegations, which are described as both extensive and deeply troubling. Without relying on the crutches of traditional media, Trump has effectively used the power of social media to directly broadcast significant events, including the signing of executive orders on far-reaching issues. This approach allows the public to receive unmanipulated, unfiltered information straight from the president, free from biased interpretations or commercial restrictions. Just a day before, while surrounded by young schoolgirls, Trump signed an executive order that redefined gender recognition in the U.S., limiting it to only two categories: male and female. In his tweet, he described this decision as historic and far-reaching, aimed at protecting families and the country from what he views as psychological and social confusion. The signing ceremony was streamed live on platforms like X, TikTok, and YouTube, ensuring the message reached millions before traditional media could even report it. In another significant executive order, also broadcast live, Trump announced the NCAA’s policy change banning men from competing in women’s sports. He proudly declared, “This is a great day for women and girls across our country. Men should have NEVER been allowed to compete against women in the first place, but I am proud to be the president to SAVE Women’s Sports.” He urged the Olympics Committee to adopt similar measures, emphasizing that this policy is popular not just in America but worldwide. Through these direct communications, Trump continues to challenge the traditional media’s gatekeeping role, reinforcing his commitment to transparency and public engagement. Further challenging the conventional media landscape, Trump proposed a bold geopolitical solution regarding the Gaza Strip. In his tweet, he suggested transferring the Gaza Strip

to the United States by Israel following the conclusion of hostilities. According to the proposal, Palestinians, including individuals like Chuck Schumer, would be resettled in significantly safer and more attractive communities with modern homes, providing opportunities for happiness, safety, and freedom. Together with global development teams, the U.S. would slowly build what is thought to be one of the world’s most amazing projects, without sending U.S. troops there, which would help keep the region stable for a long time. Trump’s strategy extends beyond media influence to leveraging the economic and military might of the United States to achieve his objectives. He has compelled countries like Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico to accept deportees, using diplomatic pressure effectively. His strong stance on the Panama Canal prompted the Panamanian government to withdraw from China’s Belt and Road Initiative and waive transition fees for American ships. Trump’s bold proposal concerning Gaza played a role in pushing both Hamas and Israel towards a ceasefire agreement. Additionally, his assertive approach regarding Greenland influenced the European Union to assume greater financial responsibilities within NATO. His unconventional and fearless approach with the media, allies, neighbors, and adversaries alike is producing tangible results. By proposing out-of-the-box solutions that appeal to common sense while defying bureaucratic red tape, Trump sets a new standard for geopolitical actors. His methods challenge the status quo, exposing the unnecessary complexities often created to justify bureaucratic dominance and financial gain. Through these bold moves, Trump has not only reshaped political communication but also redefined the role of the presidency in an era dominated by digital connectivity. His unfiltered engagement with the public through social media platforms represents a seismic shift in how leaders connect with citizens, challenge traditional narratives, and assert their policies on both national and international stages. Trump’s combination of economic power and direct communication strategies has positioned him as a transformative figure in modern politics, establishing new standards of media management and geopolitics.

Chinese quest for global order

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Despite its progress, Beijing faces significant obstacles in realizing its vision. The BRI has encountered financial sustainability issues, with declining investments and withdrawals by key participants like Italy. Public opinion remains mixed, with surveys in regions such as Africa and Latin America indicating skepticism about China’s long-term intentions. Moreover, concerns about debt dependency and the undermining of universal human rights persist

The ambition of Chinese President Xi Jinping to reshape the international order is a reality that cannot be overlooked. His vision seeks to dismantle the existing alliance network led by Washington and replace it with a framework underpinned by Chinese values and priorities. This involves eliminating the dominance of the U.S. dollar, weakening Washington’s technological monopoly and instilling Chinese notions of common security and economic development into global institutions. According to Xi, this “community with a shared future for mankind” is within reach. During the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in December, Xi characterized Beijing as a “confident, self-reliant, open and inclusive major country” and proclaimed the transformation of his vision from a “Chinese initiative” to an “international consensus.” Four major programs support this vision: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). Despite skepticism from American policymakers and global observers, who often point to the faltering Chinese economy and the unpopularity of China’s diplomatic approaches, Xi’s vision is gaining traction in specific contexts. Beijing’s initiatives resonate particularly among nations dissatisfied with the current international order, as they promise a more inclusive and multipolar framework. To counter China’s rise, the United States must embrace systemic changes, investing in technological, military and diplomatic capacities. Furthermore, stabilizing U.S.-China relations will enable Washington to address longer-term challenges effectively. China’s vision is rooted in a multipolar system emphasizing absolute sovereignty, development-driven solutions and security rooted in international consensus. Beijing portrays its model as fundamentally distinct from the U.S.-led order, which it accuses of perpetuating Cold War mentalities, fostering division and leveraging cultural and economic hegemony for unilateral gain. This narrative resonates with countries frustrated by the dominance of Western norms and institutions. At the 2024 Munich Security Conference, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi emphasized the compatibility of Chinese and U.S. responsibilities for global stability while advocating for China’s partnerships with Russia, the European Union and the Global South. Beijing’s initiatives seek to validate the choices of nondemocratic regimes, amplify the voices of smaller democratic nations and challenge the status quo of major democracies. Dissatisfaction with the existing order has created a fertile envi-

ronment for China’s proposals. China’s strategy, developed over decades, has recently evolved into three core programs: the BRI, the GDI and the GSI. Each program supports China’s overarching goal of reshaping the international system and ensuring its centrality within it. The GCI, introduced in 2023, advances the notion that diverse civilizations and development paths should coexist without a universal imposition of values. This initiative aligns with China’s broader goal of challenging the primacy of liberal democratic principles in global governance. Initially conceived as a mechanism to address infrastructure deficits in emerging economies, the BRI has since evolved into a geo-strategic tool. It embeds Chinese technology, promotes its development model, extends its military and police reach and encourages the use of its currency. Approximately 150 countries have joined the BRI, illustrating its widespread appeal despite criticisms of debt dependency and environmental concerns. The GDI positions China as a leader in addressing global development challenges. Through collaborations with the United Nations and other institutions, it prioritizes projects on poverty alleviation, digital connectivity, climate change and health security. The GDI advances Beijing’s narrative that economic development is a prerequisite for human rights, challenging the Western focus on democracy and individual freedoms. The GSI promotes a vision of security based on dialogue, consultation and noninterference. It aims to dismantle U.S.-led alliances and advocates for absolute sovereignty and indivisible security. Although controversial particularly for its alignment with Russia’s justifications for the invasion of Ukraine the GSI has garnered support from countries disenchanted with Western military interventions. The GCI underscores the legitimacy of diverse political and economic systems, advocating that no single model should dominate global discourse. This approach appeals to nations seeking to preserve their sovereignty against perceived Western cultural imperialism. China’s multilevel strategy integrates bilateral, regional and multilateral engagements. The BRI serves as a model for embedding Chinese values into global frameworks, linking with regional initiatives like ASEAN’s Master Plan on Connectivity. Beijing’s efforts to align its initiatives with UN agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, further solidify its influence. China’s extensive diplomatic network—the largest globally—and its state-controlled media apparatus amplify its narrative. Outlets like CGTN and Xinhua promote China’s vision, often swaying public opinion in developing countries. Surveys reveal that Chinese messaging can shift percep-

tions, especially when contrasted with U.S. narratives. Despite its progress, Beijing faces significant obstacles in realizing its vision. The BRI has encountered financial sustainability issues, with declining investments and withdrawals by key participants like Italy. Public opinion remains mixed, with surveys in regions such as Africa and Latin America indicating skepticism about China’s long-term intentions. Moreover, concerns about debt dependency and the undermining of universal human rights persist. Multilateral support for initiatives like the GSI and GCI is nascent and often rhetorical. For instance, the abstention of many countries during the UN vote condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine illustrates the limits of China’s influence. Additionally, regional powers such as India resist alignment with China’s security frameworks, fearing encroachment on their strategic autonomy. To counter China’s ascent, the United States must present an alternative vision for global governance that addresses the shortcomings of the current system. This vision should prioritize inclusivity, technological innovation and sustainable development. Initiatives such as the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework lay the groundwork for such efforts but must be expanded to include countries vulnerable to Chinese influence. Public-private partnerships can bolster U.S. competitiveness by aligning strategic goals with economic incentives. Additionally, Washington should leverage its leadership in emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to establish new international norms that reflect democratic values. Engaging with a broader range of countries, particularly those in the Global South, will enhance the legitimacy of U.S.-led initiatives. Stabilizing U.S.-China relations is equally critical. Clear communication, reduced hostility and cooperative engagements on shared challenges, such as climate change and global health, will create a more constructive bilateral relationship. This approach will enable the United States to focus on long-term objectives without unnecessary distractions. China’s bid to reshape the international order is both ambitious and multifaceted, appealing to nations disillusioned with the status quo. While Beijing’s initiatives have gained traction, significant challenges remain. For the United States, the path forward lies in presenting a compelling alternative that addresses global disparities, fosters innovation and reinforces democratic principles. By investing in diplomacy, technological leadership and inclusive governance, Washington can ensure its continued relevance in a rapidly changing world. The competition between these two visions will define the contours of the 21st-century international system.

Briefs

Government offers fresh talks to PTI

FROM PAGE 01
action but exactly in the opposite directions as the incumbent chief executive asked the opposition party to resume talks via parliamentary committee while the former premier dissolved its negotiation committee to close the chapter. The prime minister, while addressing the federal cabinet, said that the government was ready to form a parliamentary committee to continue talks with the PTI as opposed to PTI's demand to constitute a judicial commission each to probe May 9, 2023, and November 26, 2024, incidents. "It takes two to tango. This dialogue should move forward so that the country can progress, instead of bearing more harm due to their violent protests," the premier said. The premier recalled how former premier Imran Khan had constituted a parliamentary committee to probe the 2018 general elections instead of forming a judicial commission, saying he was also ready to constitute a house committee to take talks forward even after PTI "fled" from talks before getting a formal response from the government side. PM Shehbaz's offer has come just a day before the expiry of the government's deadline for dissolving its negotiation committee, which was constituted to hold talks with PTI. However, in line with PTI leadership's previous stance of boycotting talks until the government announces judicial commissions, jailed PTI founder finally dissolved its negotiation committee and tasked its members to work as a coordination committee to engage parties for making grand opposition alliance.

9th maritime exercise...

FROM PAGE 01
Arabian Sea and its initiatives to enhance regional maritime security, including Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP). The Admiral further stated that in recognition of the international community's trust in Pakistan Navy's efforts to promote peace and stability at sea, AMAN Dialogue has been introduced as an adjunct to the exercise. Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, underscored Pakistan Navy's contributions toward collaborative maritime security. He emphasized the significance of the exercise in enhancing interoperability among participants and sought their cooperation in achieving the exercise's objectives. He praised the participating countries for supporting Pakistan's commitment to peace and maritime security and acknowledged the fluttering flags of participating nations as a true embodiment of the Exercise AMAN motto - 'Together for Peace.' He expressed hope that the friendships fostered during the exercise would continue to grow.

Air Chief Marshal...

FROM PAGE 01
Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamsi Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces and Dr. Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General of the Omani Ministry of Defence. Chief of the Air Staff highlighted that both the countries have always supported each other in testing times and Pakistan Air Force is dedicated to continuing provision of training and support for the Royal Air Force of Oman from basic-to-tactical level training to the aircrew of Oman. During the meetings the leadership of Sultanate of Oman showed keen interest in National Aerospace Science & Technology Park and expressed a strong desire for enhanced industrial and technological collaboration. The Omani leadership lauded the Air Chief's visionary leadership in enhancing the force's indigenous capabilities, which have significantly bolstered the defence prowess of Pakistan. Leadership of Sultanate of Oman expressed deep desire on expanding the existing Air Force to Air Force collaboration underscoring importance of joint bilateral and multi-lateral aerial exercises, exchange visits and knowledge-sharing platforms.

Trophy for Pakistan's tri-nation ODI series unveiled

The tri-nation series kicks off in Lahore on February 8

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The glittering trophy for the upcoming tri-nation ODI series, featuring hosts Pakistan, New Zealand and South Africa, was unveiled here by the team captains. According to the details, Pakistan skipper Mohammad Rizwan, alongside his New Zealand and South Africa counterparts Mitchell Santner and Temba Bavuma, respectively, took a stroll through the local markets here before unveiling the silverware. The all-important series will kick off on February 8 with hosts Pakistan taking on New Zealand at the newly-renovated Gaddafi Stadium here. The Blackcaps will play their second group-stage fixture at the same venue when they lock horns with South Africa in a day game on February 10. The action will then shift to Karachi's National Bank Stadium, which will host the remaining two matches of the series, including the final, scheduled to be played on February 14. The tri-nation ODI series is crucial will be crucial for the three participating teams in fine-tuning their preparations for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled to run from February 19 to March 9. Pakistan white-ball captain Rizwan, who won his first three ODI series since assuming the role in November last year, will be eyeing his fourth consecutive series triumph. The wicketkeeper expressed his excitement about playing in front of the home crowd and at the newly-renovated stadiums. He further shared that the national team is well prepared for the series and the Champions Trophy and the players are committed to giving their best in the upcoming assignments. "We are excited



to be playing again in front of our home crowd and in the newly constructed stadiums in Lahore and Karachi," said Rizwan. "The preparations have gone well so far with the players looking to give their best in the tournament leading up to the ICC event," he added. New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said that the tri-nation series will be helpful for his team to acclimatise with the conditions and the nature of the wickets ahead of the marquee event. "We had a good training session

in Lahore under lights and can't wait to take on the home side on Saturday," said Santner. "It is great to be back in Pakistan and the side had a good outing when we toured last time. The tri-nation series will provide us a great opportunity to know about the wickets and help us prepare well for the upcoming pinnacle event." South Africa captain Bavuma echoed Santner's remarks and termed the series a 'great opportunity' for the side to warm up. "It is a great opportunity

for the side to warm up before the mega event. We have a mixed squad and the tri-nation tournament will help us acclimatise to the conditions before we gear up for the ICC event."

Tri-nation ODI series schedule:
February 8 - Pakistan v New Zealand (d/n)
February 10 - New Zealand v South Africa (d)
February 12 - Pakistan v South Africa (d/n)
February 14 - Final (d/n)

4th Ghazala Ansari Ladies Open Golf Championship kicks off

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The much-anticipated 4th Ghazala Ansari Ladies Challenge Cup Ladies Open Championship is set to commence on Friday at the prestigious Gymkhana Golf Club. This marks a significant milestone as it is the first-ever open championship in the history of the Ghazala Ansari Ladies Challenge Cup, transitioning from an amateur-only competition in its previous three editions to a tournament now welcoming professional lady golfers. In a press conference held

at Gymkhana Golf Club, key figures of the tournament gathered to discuss this landmark event. Dr. Asma Afzal Shami, who originally conceived the idea of dedicating championships to the forgotten icons of yesteryear, highlighted that this championship is inspiring the young golfers to tread the same path as Ghazala Ansari. She was joined by Convenor Golf Club, Mr. Shaukat Javef, Bela Azam, the tournament director, Mamoona Azam, the championship coordinator, and Munazza Shaheen, the Chief Referee. The convenor emphasized

that Gymkhana Golf Club holds a special place in the legacy of Ghazala Ansari, who belongs to this club, making it the ideal venue to host the championship for the fourth consecutive time. He ensured the club's unwavering commitment to fostering women's golf, noting that participation has steadily increased with each edition. He lauded the relentless efforts of Dr. Asma Shami and her dedicated team for luring women into golf and increasing not only the number, but also the quality of the sport. Dr. Shami commended the club's unwavering support and commitment to advancing

women's golf. She praised PGF for introducing the pro category, emphasizing how it will propel the development of ladies' golf in Pakistan. This initiative allows elite amateurs to transition into the professional circuit, thereby creating opportunities for emerging players to excel in amateur events. "This is a historic moment as we welcome professional lady golfers into this championship. The participation of players from Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Goth Machi, Peshawar, Wah Cantt, Risalpur, and Multan is a great honor, and we are thrilled to host them at Gymkhana," she remarked. Munazza Shaheen, the chief referee explained that there are now 7 categories in the championship including Professionals, WAGR Open category, Category B and C for amateur golfers with handicap 13 to 24 and 25 to 36. Then we have Senior lady golfers and juniors in two categories of ages 11 to 14 and below 10.

Smith joins Root on 36 Test tons

WEB DESK

GALLE: Steve Smith hit his 36th Test century as Australia dominated Sri Lanka on day two of the second Test in Galle. Smith was 120 not out as Australia reached 330-3 at stumps, a first-innings lead of 73. The right-hander joins England's Joe Root and India's Rahul Dravid on 36 Test centuries - the fifth most in history. The 35-year-old reached the landmark in 206 innings, the second fastest behind compatriot Ricky Ponting, who made 36 centuries in 200 innings. Smith's latest hundred came up off 191 balls with nine fours and one six. He survived an lbw review first ball, with the technology showing the ball was missing leg stump, and overturned another lbw call on 23 as he was outside the line of off stump. Smith now has four hundreds in his past five Tests after a poor run of form saw him go 12 Tests and 23 innings without one. He was outscored by wicketkeeper Alex Carey, who made his second Test century off 118 balls and was unbeaten on 139 at stumps as the pair shared an unbroken fourth-wicket stand of 239. That came after off-spinner Nishan Peris removed Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne to leave Australia 37-2 before Smith shared 54 with Usman Khawaja (36) for the third wicket. Earlier, Sri Lanka added 28 to their overnight 229-9 before spinner Matthew Kuhnemann had Lahiru Kumara caught by Beau Webster. That gave Kuhnemann his third wicket and left Kusal Mendis stranded on 85 not out. Australia lead the two-Test series 1-0 after an innings-and-242-run win in the first game.



Electricity tariff to be reduced...

FROM PAGE 01
he expressed satisfaction over the ongoing reforms in the power sector saying these are yielding positive results. Shehbaz Sharif said that he had committed to ensuring the provision of low-cost and environmentally friendly electricity. He said revising agreements with IPPs is saving the national treasury and reducing electricity prices for consumers. Alluding to the campaign against power pilferage, the Prime Minister expressed the commitment to further accelerate it to fully eliminate the losses of all distribution companies in this regard. Shehbaz Sharif mentioned that appointment of well-reputed board members from the private sector in electricity distribution companies is improving their performance. He said the reduction in transmission losses of electricity is also a clear indication of the positive results of the reforms. The meeting was informed that the recovery rate of distribution companies improved to 93.26 percent by December last year, as a result of reforms in the electricity sector and the anti-theft campaign.

PM inaugurates newly...

FROM PAGE 01
cricketers for exhibiting brilliant performances during their recent matches before entering the upcoming marquee event of the ICC's Mens Champions Trophy 2025. Premier Shehbaz expressed hope that the Pakistan squad would win the hearts of the Pakistanis by clinching victory in the Champions Trophy and especially, defeating arch-rival India in the upcoming match to be held in Dubai. He expressed pleasure over the organisation of the mega cricketing event in Pakistan after 29 years. The premier added that the Punjab government and the PCB chief would ensure foolproof security arrangements for the upcoming event. PM Shehbaz also distributed shields among top officials who performed responsibilities during the renovation work at the stadium which would host international matches of the Tri-Nation Series and the Champions Trophy this month. Meanwhile, the Pakistan cricket team's official jersey for the upcoming eight-team tournament of the Champions Trophy was unveiled during the opening ceremony of the newly-renovated Gaddafi Stadium. The ceremony features music, dance, and fireworks to create a memorable experience for fans, who have been granted free entry.

COAS hockey c'ship final round enters 4th day

LAHORE: The final round of the COAS Inter Club Hockey Championship continued on its fourth day, with two thrilling matches taking place. In the opening match of the day, Civil Quarter Peshawar secured a convincing 2-0 victory over Burni Hockey Club Quetta. Captain Afraz Hakeem and Amir scored the decisive goals for the winning team. The second match of the day ended in a nail-biting 1-1 draw between National Hockey Club Karachi and Rising Star Hockey Club Islamabad. Captain Usman Ashraf scored the lone goal for National Hockey Club Karachi, while Tayyab Raza netted the equalizer for Rising Star Hockey Club Islamabad. The championship, featuring the top 10 clubs from across the country, showcases the best of Pakistani hockey talent. The event has attracted a notable audience, including renowned Olympians and hockey officials. Notable attendees at the matches included Secretary General PHF, Olympian Rana Mujahid, Manzoorul Hassan, Shahbaz Ahmed Sr, Danish Kaleem, Muhammad Khalid, Khawaja Junaid, Anjum Saeed, Irfan Sr, Kamran Ashraf, Asif Ahmed Khan, Babar Abdullah, Yasir UI Islam and Kashif Ali. - DNA

National elite boxing c'ship to start from Feb 10

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The 41st edition of the National Elite Men's Boxing Championship and the 5th National Women's Boxing Championship, marking the return of competitive boxing to Pakistan, will begin on February 10 in Karachi organised by the Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF). According to Lt. Col. (R) Nasir Ijaz Tung, President of the Pakistan Boxing Federation, 14 teams, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, WAPDA, Railways, HEC, Police, Karachi Port Trust, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Islamabad, will compete in this prestigious event. The championship will conclude on February 15. The President of PBF further stated that, following World Boxing (WB) rules, the 41st National Elite Men's Championship will feature ten weight categories, while the 5th Women's Boxing Championship will include eight categories. It is noteworthy that

this is the first time in Pakistan's boxing history that women's participation has exceeded 100. This growth demonstrates the increasing interest in boxing among women in the country. The first elite women's championship was held in 2018 with only three categories, and now, in its fifth edition, 112 women boxers are competing in eight different categories. Nasir Ijaz Tung emphasized that gender equality is a priority in the Olympic Movement under the International Olympic Committee (IOC) charter. This supports greater access to sports for female athletes and promotes the inclusion of women in sports administration and management. The President of PBF also mentioned that all arrangements for the successful conduct of the championship have been completed. A team of technical officials has been appointed to ensure smooth event management. A total of 140 male and 112 female entries have been received, and 234 bouts will take place over the six-day event. Additionally, top-performing boxers from the championship will be selected for training camps and provided with the necessary facilities to prepare for international competitions.

Weight Categories

Men (in Kg): 47-50, 50-55, 55-60, 60-65, 65-70, 70-75, 75-80, 80-85, 85-90, 90+

Women (in Kg): 45-48, 48-51, 51-54, 54-57, 57-60, 60-65, 65-70, 70-75

Australian HC inaugurates AFL Girls Tournament

Neil Hawkins highlighted the role of sports in fostering physical fitness and international friendships. He expressed his admiration for Pakistan's emerging sports talent, stating that the young female athletes participating in the tournament have the potential to make Pakistan proud on the global stage

USAMA ARSHAD

ISLAMABAD: The AFL Girls Tournament 2025 began with great enthusiasm at the Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad, featuring some of the best female Australian Football (AFL) players from across the country. The tournament was inaugurated by the Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Neil Hawkins, in a grand ceremony. The competition, featuring five teams—Kangaroos, Dolphins, Hawks, Lions, and Dragons—got off to an exciting start, with the Kangaroos Girls team emerging as the dominant force on the first day with two consecutive victories. In the opening match, the Kangaroos delivered a commanding performance against the Dolphins, securing a 37-2 win in a one-sided contest. The second match saw the Lions overpower the Dragons with an impressive 43-6 victory. The final match of the day featured the Kangaroos again, as they defeated the Hawks 44-22, solidifying their position as early favorites in the tournament. During the opening ceremony, AFL Pakistan President Sardar Tariq and Secretary-General Chaudhry Zuqair introduced the players to the Australian High Commissioner and presented him with a commemorative shield. Speaking at the event, Mr. Neil Hawkins highlighted the role of sports in fostering physical fitness and international friendships. He expressed his admiration for Pakistan's emerging sports talent, stating that the young female athletes participating in the tournament have the potential to make Pakistan proud on the global stage. With high energy and competitive spirit on display, the AFL Girls Tournament 2025 promises thrilling action in the days ahead.



Briefs

Gold prices
up by Rs
1,346 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,346 and was sold at Rs 300,046 on Friday against its sale at Rs 298,700 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,154 to Rs.257,241 from Rs. 256,087 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat came up to Rs.235,812 from Rs. 234,754. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.51 to Rs.3,378 whereas that of ten gram went up by Rs.44 to Rs.2,896. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$10 to \$2,869 from \$2,859, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee gains
10 paise
against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday appreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.04 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.14. Pakistani cuisine recipes 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 09 paise to close at Rs289.84 against the last day's closing of Rs289.75, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.83, whereas a decrease of Rs1.01 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs347.16 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs348.17. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 3 and 02 paise to close at Rs75.97 and Rs74.40 respectively.—APP

Pak-Hungary 3rd JCEC
concludes
with signing
of important
protocols

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd session of the Pakistani-Hungarian Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation (JCEC) concluded successfully here Friday, marking an important step forward in strengthening the relationship between Pakistan and Hungary. The two-day session, held on 6th and 7th February, were co-chaired by Dr. Kazim Niaz, Federal Secretary for Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Tamas Vargha, Deputy Minister of Hungarian Ministry of Defence. The session focused on expanding economic, trade, and technical cooperation across multiple sectors, according to a press release issued by Ministry of Economic Affairs. A key outcome of the session was to establish Joint Working Group (JWG) on different sectors in order to enhance trade and investment, the press release added. In addition, Hungary's Hungarian Export Promotion Agency (HEPA) pledged its support for the development of Hungarian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan. Both sides also discussed advancing the agreement on the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments and explored opportunities for joint ventures in sectors such as agriculture, energy, healthcare, information technology, and industrial manufacturing. Moreover, both sides commit to enhance cooperation through Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA). Agriculture sector also remained focus of discussions during which Hungary's University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE) offered support to Pakistan's Agricultural Research Council (PARC) for research and the adoption of modern agricultural practices. Cooperation in water management and environmental sustainability was also a key area of discussion, with Hungarian expertise in water purification and waste management being highlighted.— Agencies

Pak-Saudi business
collaboration gains momentum

He appreciated the Jeddah Chamber's crucial role in fostering economic cooperation and expressed optimism that both nations will continue to explore new avenues for trade and investment growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan met with the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry to discuss opportunities for strengthening trade and investment ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral trade, boosting investment, and fostering long-term economic collaboration, said a press release issued here on Friday.

During the discussion, the Minister highlighted the historic and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, built on shared values, mutual trust, and strong socio-economic cooperation. He acknowledged Jeddah's strategic role as a commercial hub, emphasizing its importance in promoting trade and investment partnerships between the two nations, said a press release issued here on Friday.

The Minister underscored the remarkable 22% increase in Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia, reaching around \$700 million, reflecting the growing economic momentum. He stressed the need to further enhance bilateral trade and establish a mutually beneficial trade balance. He encouraged increased trade in high-potential sectors, including textiles, halal food, agriculture, IT, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, and engineering goods.



The Minister also invited Saudi investors to explore Pakistan's investment-friendly environment, particularly in energy, infrastructure, agriculture, mining, and industrial manufacturing. Highlighting Pakistan's Revised Visa Policy, the Minister informed the Jeddah Chamber that GCC citizens can now enter Pakistan without a visa and stay for up to 90 days, facilitating easier business travel and investment. He appreciated the contributions of Pakistani entrepreneurs and professionals in Saudi Arabia, many of whom have successfully operated businesses in the Kingdom for decades. Over the past five

years, 1.7 million Pakistanis have traveled to Saudi Arabia, reinforcing the Kingdom's significance as a business and employment hub. He also noted that Pakistan received \$7.4 billion in remittances from Saudi Arabia last fiscal year, making it a vital contributor to Pakistan's economy. The Minister highlighted the successful visit of a 130-member Saudi business delegation to Islamabad, during which 34 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were signed across multiple sectors. He emphasized the need for joint ventures between Pakistani and Saudi businesses to enhance industrial cooperation and know-

edge sharing. To further support business linkages, the Minister proposed the establishment of a "Pakistan-Saudi Business Facilitation Desk" at the Jeddah Chamber. This initiative would provide support services and assistance to businesses from both countries. He also introduced the Pakistan Investor Forum, aimed at empowering Pakistani entrepreneurs and strengthening their business networks in Saudi Arabia. He encouraged Jeddah Chamber members to collaborate with the forum to maximize trade and investment opportunities. Discussions also covered improving customs procedures, certifications,

and compliance with trade standards to facilitate smoother and more efficient trade operations. The Minister stressed the need to expand trade in key Pakistani exports, particularly halal meat, dairy products, IT services, and pharmaceuticals. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to deepening economic ties with Saudi Arabia and strengthening institutional partnerships. He appreciated the Jeddah Chamber's crucial role in fostering economic cooperation and expressed optimism that both nations will continue to explore new avenues for trade and investment growth.

Pakistan, OIC discuss economic
trade Cooperation in Jeddah

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, met with Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha in Jeddah to discuss avenues for strengthening economic, trade, and development cooperation among OIC member states. During the meeting, Minister Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to deeper engagement with the OIC, emphasizing that frequent high-level interactions are crucial for fostering stronger economic and strategic ties within the Muslim world, said a press release issued here on Friday. He conveyed the Prime Minister of Pakistan's appreciation for the Secretary-General's participation in the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities, held in Islamabad on January 11-12, 2025, and commended the OIC's efforts in advancing women's empowerment across member states. The Minister underscored the importance of economic and trade connectivity in promoting prosperity and stability among OIC nations. He praised the Secretary-General's leadership in facilitating trade and development initiatives, highlighting their role in strengthening intra-OIC cooperation. Inviting the Secretary-General to visit the ongoing Made in Pakistan Exhibition at the Jeddah International Exhibition and Convention Center, Minister Jam Kamal Khan described the event as a landmark initiative, showcasing Pakistan's industrial strength and providing a dynamic platform for economic collaboration with OIC countries. He further reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to hosting the 18th OIC Trade Fair in Lahore later this year, seeking the OIC's support to ensure its success. Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha welcomed Pakistan's proactive role in promoting economic integration within the OIC and expressed his appreciation for Pakistan's initiatives aimed at enhancing trade and development among member states. He lauded Pakistan's efforts in fostering greater cooperation within the OIC and emphasized the organization's commitment to facilitating trade, investment, and sustainable growth across the Muslim world. At the conclusion of the meeting, Minister Jam Kamal Khan wrote his remarks in the OIC's Guest Book, expressing Pakistan's strong belief in the OIC's ability to unite and uplift the Muslim Ummah through economic collaboration. Both sides reiterated their commitment to collective progress, emphasizing the need for joint initiatives to strengthen trade, investment, and development partnerships among OIC member states. First Joint.—DNA

World community
urged to resolve
Kashmir dispute to
usher in peace

WASHINGTON: Speakers at an engaging seminar held at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington reaffirmed their unwavering support to the oppressed people of Indian-occupied Kashmir, and urged the international community to push for a settlement of the decades-old dispute. Entitled 'Longstanding, Unresolved, and Unfinished Agenda: Important Aspects of the Kashmir Issue,' the participants highlighted key legal, political and security dimensions of Kashmir dispute, drawing the international community's attention to its ramifications. They also underscored India's persistent refusal to honour its commitments, the unfulfilled promises made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir by the global community, and the implications of India's unilateral action in 2019, which further destabilized the region. The two-session event drew a diverse audience, including members of civil society, Pakistani-Americans (particularly from Azad Jammu and Kashmir), media representatives, and students from various universities across Washington, D.C.—APP

Al-Qaeda in
Yemen says
senior official
killed in blast

DUBAI: A senior member of Al-Qaeda in Yemen has been killed in a bomb blast, according to a statement from the extremist group behind a string of high-profile attacks. Abu Yusuf Al-Muhammadi Al-Hadrami died when a motorcycle packed with explosives detonated near where he worked in Marib, east of the rebel-held capital Sanaa. Washington regards the group, known as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), as most dangerous branch of group Born in 2009, AQAP grew and developed in the chaos of Yemen's war. It has been responsible for multiple attacks, including the deadly 2000 bombing of the USS Cole off the coast of Aden, which killed 17 US military personnel. In 2015, AQAP claimed that two French gunmen who massacred 12 people in an attack on the Paris offices of the Charlie Hebdo magazine were acting on its behalf.—APP

Syria's 'Caesar'
whistleblower
unveils identity

BEIRUT: A Syrian whistleblower, who smuggled tens of thousands of pictures depicting torture under Bashar Assad, on Thursday revealed his identity for the first time, two months after the longtime ruler was toppled. "I am First Lt. Farid Al-Madhan, the (former) head of the forensic evidence department at the military police in Damascus, known as Caesar," he said in a televised interview with Qatari broadcaster Al Jazeera. Identified at the time only as a Syrian military photographer under the pseudonym Caesar, he had fled the country in 2013, taking with him some 55,000 graphic images taken between 2011 and 2013. Describing himself during the interview as a "son of a free Syria," he said he was from the city of Daraa, "the cradle of the Syrian revolution." Following the outbreak of Syria's civil war in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests, he said he was tasked with "taking pictures of victims of detention." These included "old men, women and children, who were detained at security checkpoints in Damascus, and from protest squares that called for freedom and dignity," said Madhan, who added that he currently resides in France. "They were detained, tortured and killed in bloody, systematic ways and their bodies were transferred to military morgues to be photographed.—APP

Morocco foils 78,685
migrant attempts to
reach Europe

RABAT: Morocco stopped 78,685 migrants from illegally crossing into EU territory in 2024, up 4.6 percent from a year earlier, the Interior Ministry said on Thursday. The figures highlight "growing migratory pressure in an unstable regional environment," the ministry said in response to questions. Among the migrants, 58 percent were from West Africa, 12 percent from North Africa where Morocco is located, and 9 percent from East and Central Africa, it said. Years of armed conflict across Africa's Sahel region, unemployment, and the impact of climate change on farming communities are among the reasons driving migrants toward Europe. Morocco and neighboring EU member Spain have strengthened cooperation against undocumented migration since they patched a separate diplomatic feud in 2022. The North African country has for long been a major launch pad for African migrants aiming to reach Europe through the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, or by jumping the fence surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco. Last year, there were 14 group attempts to cross into Ceuta and Melilla, compared with six in 2023, the ministry said. Moroccan authorities rescued 18,645 would-be migrants from unseaworthy boats in 2024, up 10.8 percent from 2023, it said. Last month as many as 50 migrants may have drowned in the latest deadly wreck involving people trying to make the Atlantic crossing from West Africa to Spain's Canary Islands, a migrant rights group said.—APP

Third Round of Pak-Uzbek
bilateral political consultations

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 Asad Gillani, while the Uzbek delegation was led by Mr. Aloyev Bakhromjon

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 col-

laboration 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. The next round of Pakistan-Uzbekistan Bilateral Political Consultations will take place in Pakistan on mutually agreed dates.

Call for speeding up medical
evacuations from war-ravaged Gaza

UNITED NATIONS: More than 12,000 critically ill and injured patients, including at least 5,000 children, urgently need to be evacuated from Gaza, amid the crumbling health system, the UN World Health Organization (WHO)'s top official in the region said Thursday. Speaking from Gaza, WHO Representative Rik Peeporkorn described a scene of widespread destruction, overwhelmed medical facilities and growing mental health needs, as the population in the enclave gradually returns to what is left of their homes after nearly 16 months of conflict. "Everyone in Gaza is affected...stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. It's everywhere," he said, highlighting the psychological toll on both residents and health workers. Before the war, Gaza had more than 3,500 hospital beds. Today, only 1,900 remain, and very few intensive care units (ICUs) and incubators for newborns, leaving

medical staff struggling to treat critical cases. Even before the war, mental health services were limited, with just one psychiatric hospital, six community centres, and an NGO network providing support. Now, those facilities are either destroyed or non-functional. The situation is particularly concerning in northern Gaza, where only two psychiatrists remain. In addition, only one hospital remains partly functional in the region, and the remaining either destroyed or severely damaged. "Jabalya is like a wasteland. The destruction...is beyond belief," he added. Dr. Peeporkorn further stated that medical evacuations of critically ill and injured patients have begun, with 35 to 40 patients transferred daily. "It is incredibly important that we expedite this and speed this up," he said, emphasizing that, according to WHO estimates, between 12,000 to 14,000 patients need to be evacuated from Gaza, includ-

ing at least 5,000 children. Among the total estimated patients, about half suffer from trauma-related injuries while others need urgent treatment for chronic conditions such as cancer and cardiovascular disease. Dr. Peeporkorn called for the urgent re-opening of additional medical corridors, especially the "traditional referral pathway" of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where facilities are ready to receive patients. Critical infrastructure, including electricity networks, has suffered extensive damage across the Gaza Strip. Beyond the dire health crisis, the broader humanitarian situation in Gaza remains critical, with severe shortages of clean water, food, and essential services. UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher visited the enclave on Thursday, as UN agencies and partners continue responding to immense needs, a UN spokesperson said. "In northern Gaza, Fletcher toured two hospitals — Al

Shifa in Gaza City and Al Awda in Jabalya — where he met with patients, staff and management," Farhan Haq, Deputy UN Spokesperson, told reporters at a news briefing in New York. "Leaving the Al Awda hospital, he spoke with survivors and returnees in Jabalya who are trying to rebuild their lives amid the rubble." Farhan Haq further reported that water shortages remain particularly acute. The only operational water well in north Gaza, run by the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), serves as a crucial lifeline for clean drinking water. However, widespread infrastructure destruction has left many residents without reliable access. Humanitarian partners are distributing 2,500 cubic metres of safe drinking water daily, reaching about 411,000 people, but this remains far below the actual needs. A partner organization is also providing cleaning and sanitation services at 17 displacement sites in northern Gaza, benefiting

nearly 12,000 displaced individuals. "Water, sanitation and hygiene partners are carrying out assessments in locations across the Strip to repair water wells, install dosing pumps, and set up water filling points," Farhan Haq said, adding: "while some repairs are already underway, further progress hinges on teams being able to clear debris and carry out. Meanwhile in the West Bank, Israeli military operations have intensified in Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas, severely restricting Palestinian access to essential aid, including water, food, medicine and supplies for infants. In Tubas governorate, Israeli forces have been operating in the El Far'a refugee camp for five consecutive days, Mr. Haq reported. "They have imposed a curfew, reportedly prohibiting residents from leaving their homes. They also bulldozed roads and damaged water networks, forcing residents to rely on collecting rainwater." — Agencies

Briefs

Acting president summons NA session

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Acting president Yousuf Raza Gilani summoned a session of the National Assembly on Monday (Feb 10), at 5:00pm.

According to a notification issued by the National Assembly Secretariat, the session has been convened under the powers vested in the acting president under Article 54(1) of the Constitution. This will be the 13th session of the 16th National Assembly. In the last session, the National Assembly passed the PECA Act Amendment Bill 2025, presented by Federal Minister Rana Tanveer, prompting journalists to protest and walk out from the press gallery.

None of the government's allied parties opposed the PECA Act Amendment Bill 2025, while the opposition had already walked out before the bill was presented.

PIA approves pay raise for employees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Friday approved a cadre-wise salary increase for its employees. According to a statement from the PIA spokesperson, the approval came during a recent board meeting, where cadre-wise salary increase was approved to address the growing financial pressures faced by staff.

The last salary increase for PIA employees was made four years ago, after which the soaring inflation rates have significantly affected the financial well-being of employees. The spokesperson also noted that the total number of PIA employees has now fallen below 7,000, with the number continuing to decline.

Iran condemns new US sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran on Friday condemned as "illegal" and "unjustified" new financial sanctions by the United States that target a network accused of shipping hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Iranian crude oil to China. "The decision of the new US government to exert pressure on the Iranian nation by preventing Iran's legal trade with its economic partners is an illegitimate, illegal and violative measure," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement.

The US move was "categorically unjustified and contrary to international rules", Baqaei added. The US Department of the Treasury on Thursday announced financial sanctions against an international network "facilitating the shipment of millions of barrels of Iranian crude oil worth hundreds of millions of dollars" to China. - Agencies



HARBIN: President Asif Ali Zardari in a group photo with the Heads of States/Governments attending the Opening Ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games 2025. - DNA

Pakistan making progress on economic stability: Fitch

IMF reviews and external financing hinge on structural reforms, says Fitch Ratings

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has continued to make headway in restoring economic stability and rebuilding external buffers, Fitch Ratings said in a note on Thursday. It added that progress on difficult structural reforms would be key to upcoming International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme reviews and continued financing from multilateral and bilateral lenders. The State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) decision to cut the policy rate to 12% on January 27 underscored recent progress in taming inflation, Fitch noted. Consumer price inflation fell to just over 2% year-on-year in January 2025, down from an average of nearly 24% in the fiscal year ending June 2024 (FY24). It wrote that rapid disinflation reflected fading base effects from earlier subsidy reforms and exchange rate stability, supported by a tight monetary stance that subdued domestic demand and external financing needs. Economic activity is now benefiting from stability and falling interest rates, having absorbed tighter policy settings, Fitch added.

It expects real value-added growth of 3.0% in FY25, noting that private sector credit growth turned positive in real terms in October 2024 for the first time since June 2022. Strong remittance inflows, robust agricultural exports, and tight policy measures helped Pakistan's current account post a surplus of about \$1.2 billion (over 0.5% of GDP) in the six months to December 2024, reversing a similarly sized deficit in FY24. Fitch said that foreign exchange market reforms in 2023 facilitated this shift. It had anticipated a slight widening of the current account deficit in FY25 when it upgraded Pakistan's rating to 'CCC+' in July 2024. Foreign exchange reserves are set to exceed targets under Pakistan's \$7 billion IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and Fitch's earlier projections. Gross official reserves reached over \$18.3 billion by end-2024, about three months' worth of external

Pakistan to 'renegotiate' LNG deal with Qatar: Malik

"Azerbaijan's contract is more flexible and cost-effective," says Petroleum Minister Malik

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is set to renegotiate its liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply agreement with Qatar, through a provision that permits either party to review or terminate the 10-year deal after a decade. The decision comes amid rising energy costs, as the government aims to secure more favourable terms to meet the country's growing energy demands. Federal Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik disclosed this development while briefing the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Energy (Petroleum Division), highlighting the government's strategy to optimise energy agreements and reduce financial burdens. He highlighted that the existing agreement with Qatar, which carries a 13.37% slope, is more expensive compared to other international deals. "The Qatar agreement is costly, and we will negotiate better terms next year," Malik said. In addition to the Qatar deal, Malik briefed the committee on Pakistan's LNG agreement with Azerbaijan, which operates on a take-and-pay basis. This arrangement provides flexibility, allowing Pakistan to purchase cargoes as needed without being locked into rigid commitments. "Azerbaijan's contract is more flexible and cost-effective," Malik noted, adding that Azerbaijan offers one cargo per month, with the option to decline purchases if necessary. Malik said Pakistan's refineries need major upgrades to meet Euro-V standards, while a biofuel policy will be presented to the cabinet within a month. During the standing committee meeting, chaired by Syed Mustafa Mehmood, Sindh's gas shortage echoed, with provincial representatives decrying the diversion of its surplus gas to other provinces in violation of constitutional provisions. Lawmakers from Sindh demanded amendments to the Constitution if such practices continue. Malik acknowledged that resource distribution has been a contentious issue since Pakistan's inception. "The distribution of resources has always been this way, even before my tenure," he said. Malik insisted gas allocation is constitutionally compliant but admitted Sindh is not receiving its fair share. Sindh's Syed Naveed Qamar argued that the Constitution prioritizes gas for producing provinces, yet Sindh faces shortages. The Petroleum Secretary revealed 80% of Sindh's industry relies on local gas compared to 20% in Punjab, yet Sindh's gas is supplied to Balochistan, where losses are high over 50%. Committee Chairman Mehmood questioned why gas is being diverted to areas with poor recoveries. Officials from SSGC said that high court has ruled that consumers in the province cannot be billed more than a certain limit, a decision that has been challenged in court.

payments, up from around \$15.5 billion in June. However, reserves remain low relative to funding needs, with over \$22 billion in public external debt maturing in FY25. This includes nearly \$13 billion in bilateral deposits, which Fitch believes will be rolled over, citing commitments to the IMF. Saudi Arabia rolled over \$3 billion in December, while the UAE extended \$2 billion in January. Fitch wrote that new bilateral capital flows are expected to be increasingly commercial and linked to reforms. It cited discussions on the partial sale of a government stake in a copper mine to a Saudi investor as an example. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also recently agreed on a deferred oil payment facility.

Despite large maturities and lenders' existing exposures, securing sufficient external financing remains a challenge. The authorities have budgeted for about \$6 billion in funding from multilaterals, including the IMF, in FY25, but Fitch noted that around \$4 billion of this would effectively refinance existing debt. A recently announced \$20 billion 10-year framework with the World Bank Group aligns broadly with expectations, with the group's current project portfolio at \$17 billion and annual net new lending averaging \$1 billion over the past five years. Fitch acknowledged progress on fiscal reform despite some setbacks. The primary fiscal surplus has outperformed IMF targets, although federal tax revenue growth in the first half of FY25 fell short of the IMF's indicative performance criterion. It also noted that while all provinces have legislated higher agricultural income taxes - a key structural condition of the EFF - the reform's January 2025 implementation deadline was missed due to delays. In July, Fitch said that positive rating action could follow sustained reserve recovery, further easing of external financing risks, and fiscal consolidation in line with IMF commitments. However, it warned that deteriorating external liquidity, such as delays in IMF reviews, could trigger negative action.

Imran's lawyer arrested for 'throwing insults' at jail officer

Faisal Chaudhry claims his only fault was to convey PTI founder's conversation in public

DNA

RAWALPINDI: PTI founder Imran Khan's lawyer Faisal Chaudhry on Friday was arrested by police outside Rawalpindi's Adiala jail a day after he used abusive language against a jail officer for not getting permission to meet the incarcerated former premier. A heavy contingent of police reached Adiala jail's check post after Chaudhry reached there to hold a meeting with Khan. They arrested the lawyer for using derogatory language against jail officer Imran Riaz a day ago.

Police sources confirmed that Chaudhry was "formally arrested" and shifted to Adiala jail's checkpost. Talking to journalists outside the jail, Chaudhry criticised that a notice was issued today following the incident that took place at internal gate yesterday. He added that he had sent court order to the jail superintendent via WhatsApp. He claimed that his only fault was to convey the PTI founder's conversation in public. Yesterday, Chaudhry was engaged in a verbal altercation with the Adiala jail administration after he was barred from entering the prison.

Indictment proceedings against PTI leaders adjourned

SARGODHA: Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub and several other Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders could not appear in their indictment proceedings on Friday. Their lawyers filed petition citing what he called 'genue reasons' over their absence from the court. The court postponed the hearing and ordered the suspects to appear in the next hearing. The hearing in the May 9 incident was held in an anti-terrorism court in Sargodha in which NA Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan, Opposition Leader Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmed Khan Bhachar, Bilal Ejaz Chatha, Sanam Javed and Aliya Hamza could not appear in the court. - DNA

Trump imposes sanctions on International Criminal Court

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Thursday authorised economic and travel sanctions targeting people who work on International Criminal Court investigations of US citizens or US allies such as Israel, repeating action he took during his first term. The move coincides with a visit to Washington by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who - along with his former defense minister and a leader of group Hamas - is wanted by the ICC over the conflict in the Gaza Strip. It was unclear how quickly the US would announce names of people sanctioned. During the first Trump administration in 2020, Washington imposed sanctions on then-prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and one of her top aides over the ICC's investigation into alleged war crimes by American troops in Afghanistan. The ICC did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The sanctions include freezing any US assets of those designated and barring them and their families from visiting the United States. The 125-member ICC is a permanent court that can prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression against the territory of member states or by their nationals. The United States, China, Russia and Israel are not members. Trump signed the executive order after US Senate Democrats last week blocked a Republican-led effort to pass legislation setting up a sanctions regime targeting the war crimes court. The court has taken measures to shield staff from possible US sanctions, paying salaries three months in advance, as it braced for financial restrictions that could cripple the war crimes tribunal, sources told Reuters last month. In December, the court's president, judge Tomoko Akane, warned that sanctions would "rapidly undermine the Court's operations in all situations and cases, and jeopardise its very existence."

Pak strengthens defense ties with Hungary and Bangladesh

These high-profile interactions underscore Pakistan's commitment to fostering strategic defense partnerships and enhancing cooperation with key regional and global allies



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan continues to strengthen its defense and security partnerships as high-level military engagements took place at the Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Tamás Vargha, State Secretary and Deputy

Minister of Defence of Hungary, and Admiral M. Nazmul Hassan, Chief of Naval Staff of Bangladesh, separately called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), to discuss regional security dynamics and avenues for enhanced bilateral cooperation. During his meeting, the Hungarian Deputy Minister of Defence and General Mirza deliberated on evolving regional challenges and stressed the need for exploring new opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration in the defense and security domains. Mr. Vargha also praised the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. In a separate engagement, Admiral M. Nazmul Hassan of Bangladesh focused on maritime collaboration and mutual strategic interests with General Mirza. Both leaders reiterated the significance of strengthening bilateral defense ties to promote regional peace and stability. The Bangladeshi naval chief also lauded the professionalism of Pakistan's military and recognized its contributions to counterterrorism efforts.

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