



# Islamabad POST

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**British HC reaffirms UK's commitment to Pak economic growth**

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**Pakistan moving from darkness to progress: Nawaz**

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**Starc withdraws from Champions Trophy 2025**

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## Calls end to genocide in Palestine

# IMF resistance to power tariff cut not a concern: PM

Global lender's chief has assured IMF will duly consider Pakistan's plan to cut power tariffs, says premier

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that concerns over the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rejecting a reduction in electricity prices had been put to rest. Inflation-stricken consumers in Pakistan have been grappling with unaffordable power tariffs in recent years. These spikes have stirred social unrest and shuttered industries in the \$350 billion economy, which has contracted twice in recent years as inflation hit record highs. "The global lender's chief has assured that Pakistan's plan for lowering power tariffs will be given due consideration," the premier said while sharing details of his recent visit to Dubai with a federal cabinet meeting. PM Shehbaz on Tuesday met International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on the sidelines of the World Government Summit (WGS) 2025 in Dubai, as the first review of a \$7-billion bailout, scheduled for early March, looms. Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir also accompanied PM Shehbaz on an official visit to Dubai, where both leaders held talks with United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on bilateral ties and investment opportunities. Addressing the meeting Shehbaz said in his meeting with the IMF's managing director in Dubai he discussed the challenges faced by Pakistan's power sector at length. "I told her that industries can only run and economic growth can be achieved if the cost of production is reduced," he said, adding that the IMF official gave a positive response. "The concern that the IMF would not accept a power tariff reduction has now been dispelled," Shehbaz said, adding that the international lender has invited Pakistan to present its plan for lowering electricity prices. The prime minister also commended his economic team for an excellent job in negotiating the loan deal and executing the agreed reforms,

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## PM, IAEA chief discuss peaceful use of atomic tech

With the IAEA's support, Pakistan has made significant progress in nuclear power generation, industrial development, healthcare, and agricultural advancements

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General (DG) Rafael Mariano Grossi paid Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif a courtesy call on Wednesday, according to a statement from the Press Information Department (PID). According to the statement, the PM commended the IAEA's positioning of nuclear energy as a solution to mitigate climate change and emphasised Pakistan's commitment to leveraging atomic technology for sustainable development. "During the meeting, the peaceful applications of nuclear technology in various sectors, including cancer diagnostics and treatment, agriculture, food preservation, water management, and industry, were discussed," the statement read. PID stated that PM Shehbaz noted Pakistan's decades-long "productive and mutually beneficial partnership" with the IAEA, of which it is a founding member. "With the IAEA's support, Pakistan has made significant progress in nuclear power generation, industrial development,

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ISLAMABAD: Director General of International Atomic Energy Association Mr. Raphael Mariano Grossi calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

## Pakistan into tri-series final as SA humbled

Pakistan to face New Zealand in tri-series final in Karachi on Feb 14

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Salman Ali Agha and Mohammad Rizwan scored dominant centuries and powered Pakistan into the tri-nation ODI series final with a historic six-wicket victory over South Africa here at the National Bank Stadium on Wednesday. Chasing a daunting 353-run target, the home side knocked the winning runs for the loss of four wickets and six balls to spare, thanks to a record fourth-wicket partnership between Agha and Rizwan. Pakistan, however, had a contrasting start to the pursuit as their ace batter Babar Azam continued to struggle in his role as an opener and was dismissed by Wiaan Mulder on the first delivery of the seventh over.

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## Pakistan-Turk joint military drills begin

The purpose of the exercise is to enhance professional skills through joint training

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The opening ceremony of the two-week-long joint military exercise "Ataturk XIII" was held at the Special Operations School, Cherat. The joint drills are being participated by the Special Forces of Turkey and Pakistan's Special Services Group Units. This is the 13th bilateral joint exercise between the armed forces of both countries in the fight against terrorism. The commandant of the Special Operations School, Cherat, was the Chief Guest

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## Demands judicial commission

# Imran reiterates 'election fraud' in 3rd letter to COAS

Money launderers were installed into power through rigging, claims PTI founder

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan has penned a third open letter to Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, reiterating election rigging allegations and "bringing money launderers" into power, his lawyer said on Wednesday. "The PTI founder, in his letter to the army chief, has raised the issue of giving preference to the minority over the majority through election fraud," his lawyer Faisal Chaudhry said in a statement. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician, who has been behind bars since August 2023, penned two "open letters" to the army chief on Feb 3 and Feb 8, which he said were written "because all democratic avenues had been obstructed". In previous letters, Imran pointed out what he claimed was a growing distance between

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## People's mandate was stolen in 2024 elections: Abbasi

The veteran politician said that the parliament is full of unelected people

DNA

KAHUTA: Former prime minister and chief of Awam Pakistan Party Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that the mandate of people was stolen in 2024 elections. Addressing an event in Kahuta, the veteran politician said that the parliament is full of unelected people. "The election of 2018 was also rigged but the 2024 election was the most

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## Trump, Putin call

# 'Negotiations will begin on Ukraine'

Trump adds that he has instructed a team, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, to lead the negotiations

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump says he had a "lengthy and highly productive" phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin. In a post on his Truth Social platform, the US president says the pair discussed Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as AI. They both agreed, Trump says, that "we want to stop the millions of deaths taking place in the War with Russia/Ukraine". He explains the pair agreed to work together closely, including mutual visits to their respective nations. "We have also agreed to have our respective

teams start negotiations immediately, and we will begin by calling President Volodymyr Zelensky, of Ukraine, to inform him of the conversation, something which I will be doing right now." Trump adds that he has instructed a team, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, to lead the negotiations. Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Wednesday that NATO membership for Ukraine was unrealistic and in sweeping remarks suggested Kyiv should abandon hopes of winning all its territory back from Russia and instead prepare for a negotiated peace settlement

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## Briefs

### Electricity prices slashed by Rs. 1.23

The relief will be reflected in the electricity bills for February

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has approved a reduction in electricity prices by Rs. 1.23 per unit for a month. According to a notification issued here, the reduction is applicable for the month of February and is a result of the monthly fuel adjustment for December, according to NEPRA. The relief will be reflected in the electricity bills for February. However, the reduction will not apply to lifeline electricity and electric vehicle charging stations. K-Electric consumers will also benefit from the price reduction of Rs. 1.23 per unit, as part of the monthly fuel adjustment for November.

### Boat tragedy FIA arrests prime suspect from Gujrat

The arrested suspect was wanted in multiple cases in 2023 at the Composite Circle Gujrat

DNA

GUJRAT: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested prime suspect in Libya boat tragedy 2023 from Gujrat. As per details, FIA Gujranwala Zone-I arrested Zubair Mahar from Gujrat for his involved his Libya boat tragedy in 2023. The prime suspect's name was also included in the red book of highly wanted human smugglers. The FIA officials said the arrested suspect was wanted in multiple cases in 2023 at the Composite Circle Gujrat.

## COAS stresses patriotism and unity for progress

He honoured the sacrifices of people of Pakistan in nation's struggle against the menace of terrorism, and appreciated their resolute support to the Armed Forces and LEAs



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), addressed a gathering of young university and college students, "representing youth

from all across Pakistan". During his interaction, COAS encouraged the students to strive for excellence in their academic pursuits and to develop skills that would enable them to contribute positively to the country's progress. He also shared perspective on the impact of external environment on Pakistan, especially the threat from trans-border terrorism. The Army Chief praised the youth for their energy, creativity, and ability to innovate, stating that they are the future leaders of Pakistan. COAS highlighted the role of the Pakistan Army in safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He honoured the sacrifices of people of Pakistan in nation's struggle against the menace of terrorism, and appreciated their resolute support to the Armed Forces and LEAs. Emphasizing the need to imbibe 'Pakistani', COAS highlighted the significance of Pakistan's history, culture, and values in the intellectual development of our youth.

## 'Army Act amend cannot override fundamental rights'

Judge wonders if soldier marrying second time sans first wife's consent will be tried in military court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Jamal Mandokhail questioned on Wednesday whether a member of the armed forces, committing an offence at home, would fall under the Army Act's jurisdiction. The remarks came as a seven-member constitutional bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard intra-court appeals against military trials of civilians on Wednesday. Lawyer Salman Akram Raja, counsel for convict Arzam Junaid, presented his arguments before the court. During the hearing, Raja argued that the case involved two issues, one of which was related to Article 175. He said that the doors would not be closed as far as fundamental rights were concerned. Justice Mandokhail inquired whether merging fundamental rights with a specific act could lead to their violation. He further questioned if a soldier, marrying a second time without his first wife's consent, would be tried in a military court. Raja responded by calling the Army Act a "black hole,"

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## "Government not responsible for trade"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting the private sector, stating that trade is not the government's responsibility. Speaking at the Insurance Impact Conference organised by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), he emphasised the need for structural reforms and innovation in the insurance sector. Aurangzeb highlighted the government's progress in achieving macroeconomic stability over the past 12 months, citing a "positive" meeting with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief, who welcomed

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## Empowering Rural Women Sindh lawmakers advocate for central role in water management

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Members of the Sindh Assembly (MPAs), civil society representatives, women's rights activists, government officials, and water management experts gathered on Tuesday to emphasize the critical need to empower rural women in water resource management. This workshop was jointly organized by the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA) and WaterAid Pakistan at a local hotel. The focus of the workshop was on advancing gender-responsive, inclusive, and climate-resilient approaches within the legal and policy frameworks of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene). The event aimed to bridge existing gaps, promote women's leadership in WASH, and ensure sustainable access to WASH services for all.

Sindh Minister for Women Development Ms. Shaheen Sher Ali served as the chief guest, and Members of the Sindh Assembly, including Ms. Tanzeela Qambrani, Ms. Nida Khuuro, and Ms. Yasmeen Shah, also attended and shared their insights. The event featured speakers such as Ms. Sameena Nazir, Executive Director of PODA, Mian Muhammad Junaid, Country Director of WaterAid Pakistan, and Ms. Raheema Panhwar from WaterAid Pakistan. One participant from a rural area of Sindh remarked, "The idea that fetching water and managing household chores is solely a woman's duty is an outdated belief that must end now," underscoring the urgency to dismantle traditional gender roles that disproportionately burden women. The consensus among attendees was clear: actively involving women in decision-making processes related to water management is not just a matter of gender equality but is essential for ensuring sustainable and effective water solutions in rural communities. Speakers highlighted that the most climate-vulnerable communities, predominantly residing in rural areas, often lack basic facilities. These communities frequently experience extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves, which disrupt lives, damage livelihoods, and undermine critical infrastructure, including WASH services. They pointed out that women and girls shoulder a disproportionate burden due to inadequate WASH services and poor sanitation, further exacerbated by traditional gender roles. Women are primarily responsible for water collection, hygiene management, and caregiving tasks, duties that become even more challenging during climate-induced disasters. Flooding, contamination of water sources, and damage to sanitation systems worsen health and hygiene issues, particularly for marginalized communities. The workshop aimed to review existing WASH legal and policy frameworks to identify gaps and limitations in addressing gender issues and climate resilience. It also sought to promote women's leadership, enhance climate resilience, and build awareness while fostering collaboration among stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector to share best practices and innovative solutions.



## Govt stands alongside business community: Kundi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The grand inauguration ceremony of Islamabad's first premium flagship store was held with great enthusiasm, with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi as the chief guest. The event was also attended by ambassadors of various countries, including Malaysian High Commissioner H.E. Azhar Mazlan, H.E. Dr. Ramez Alrae (Syria), H.E. Wunna Hann (Myanmar), H.E. Yusuf Sharifzoda (Tajikistan), H.E. Fatou Harerimana (Rwanda), H.E. Pham Anh Tuan (Vietnam), and H.E. Rahmat HK (Indonesia). Addressing the gathering, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized that the government is working hand in hand with the business community to drive Pakistan's economic progress. He highlighted Pakistan's strong diplomatic ties with all nations, stating that the presence of ambassadors at the event reflects international confidence in Pakistan as a growing business hub. The ambassadors expressed their commitment to strengthening trade and investment cooperation, acknowledging the vast opportunities available and affirming their willingness to explore new avenues of business collaboration. They emphasized the importance of increasing trade volume and facilitating greater market access for Pakistani products.

## Spring tree plantation drive launched at National Park

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination had kicked off spring tree plantation campaign in Margalla Hills National Park, marking a significant step towards environmental conservation. Chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and Secretary Ministry of Climate Change, Ayesha Humera Ch, inaugurated the campaign by planting a sapling at the Trail 5 of the national park. She was accompanied by the Joint Secretary of the ministry Muhammad Jamil, MoC&EC Deputy Director Muhammad Saleem, Upscale Green Pakistan Programme and IWMB office-bearers. The tree plantation launching ceremony was also attended by various segments

of the society including students, teachers, government officials, media personnels and members of the civil society organisations. "Trees are the backbone of our ecosystem, and their conservation is crucial for protecting the environment from pollution," Secretary Ayesha Humera Moriani emphasised. "This year, we aim to expand the plantation campaign on a large scale, engaging communities and promoting sustainable practices." Addressing the tree plantation ceremony participants, she said that this campaign highlights the importance of plants as the "lungs of our environment" and underscored the need for their community-based conservation and protection of the natural resources

of this biodiversity-rich national park. Recognizing the critical role of future generations, the Ministry has actively involved school children in the plantation drive, she added. As part of the campaign, school children enthusiastically participated in planting fifty saplings, demonstrating their commitment to environmental stewardship. Chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and Secretary Ministry of Climate Change, Ayesha Humera Moriani also urged all stakeholders including communities, civil society organisations and individuals to join hands with the government in this noble endeavour and contribute to a greener, more sustainable Pakistan.—APP

## Jashan-e-Baharaan festival to be held in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, has announced that a three-day Jashan-e-Baharaan 2025 Festival will be organized in Islamabad from February 25 to 27 at Sports Complex in collaboration with the CDA and ICT Administration. In this regard, a meeting was held at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, discussing the arrangements for the Jashan-e-Baharaan 2025 Festival in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by CDA Board members, Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad, senior officers from the district administration, and officers from the relevant departments. During the briefing, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa was informed that various vibrant programs have been arranged for the three-day Jashan-e-Baharaan 2025 Festival, including folk dances, Kathak dance, Khattak dance, fireworks and a food festival along with other cultural activities. Diplomats from various countries and the general public will also be invited to the festival. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that the purpose of the Jashan-e-Baharaan Festival is to highlight the beauty of Islamabad, showcase the national culture, and provide entertainment facilities to the citizens. He assured that the festival will be organized in the best possible manner. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa also directed that promotion of the Jashan-e-Baharaan 2025 Festival be carried out throughout Islamabad and a comprehensive traffic plan should be devised for the events. He further emphasized that excellent parking arrangements will be made for the audience. Additionally, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed that separate entry and exit routes and designated areas be arranged for families and children during the festival, and directed Islamabad Police to ensure foolproof security. He also instructed the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad and the relevant Assistant Commissioners to oversee the various aspects of the Jashan-e-Baharaan 2025 Spring Festival's organization.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq receiving Ambassador of Hungary Mr. Bela Fazekas at Parliament House.

## CM Sindh, Interior Minister discuss matters of mutual interest

KARACHI: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah in Karachi today. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, including the upgradation of Hyderabad Stadium and the necessary steps for hosting international cricket matches in it were discussed. Both leaders agreed to identify and nurture talented cricketers from various cities and rural areas of Sindh. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah emphasized the importance of promoting young cricket players from the province and creating opportunities for them. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that a proper talent hunt program will be developed to provide young players with opportunities to advance their careers.—APP

## Mock drill to tackle forest fires

SIALKOT: A mock drill to control forest fires was held near the Shahzada area in Tehsil Pasrur, organised by the Rescue-1122. Under the supervision of District Emergency Officer (DEO) Engineer Naveed Iqbal, the drill aimed to minimise damage and ensure a timely response to forest fires. Emergency Officer Irfan Yaqoob led the exercise, with Tehsil Incharge Asim also present. The volunteer team from Union Council Shahzada and the Forest Department first demonstrated a fire extinguishing model.—APP

## Punjab CM pledges to eradicate violent extremism

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has reaffirmed her commitment to eradicating violent extremism, stating, "We strongly condemn all forms of violence, extremism, and terrorism." In her message on the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism, she highlighted Pakistan's immense

sacrifices in the fight against these threats. The CM vowed to confront extremism at every level, asserting, "I will not allow any extremist ideology to take root on Pakistani soil." She stressed the importance of unity in combating radical ideologies and terrorism. Highlighting the Punjab government's proactive approach, she said, "We are implementing strong measures to promote peace, tolerance, and

harmony," adding that the government is focused on guiding the youth toward knowledge, progress, and constructive thinking rather than extremism. CM Maryam Nawaz concluded by reaffirming the government's goal of building a society rooted in tolerance, compassion, and solidarity, aiming to create a safe, progressive, and peaceful Punjab that serves as a global symbol of harmony.

## National Women's Convention calls for enhanced Women's participation

ISLAMABAD: The Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) on Wednesday hosted a Convention on National Women's Day, 2025 at the Parliament House here, bringing together lawmakers, stakeholders, and international representatives to discuss strategies for empowering women. The event marked a key step in strengthening efforts to empower women across Pakistan. The convention was chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and attended by WPC Secretary Dr Shahida Rehmani, along with WPC members from all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, and representatives from UN Women and the European Union. The session began with the recitation of the Holy Quran and the National Anthem, followed by opening remarks from Secretary WPC and MNA Dr Shahida Rehmani highlighting the legislative achievements spearheaded by women parliamentarians, notably

the "Protection Against Harassment at the Workplace Act," which showcased exemplary cross-party collaboration. She also advocated for mandatory measures during general elections to ensure a minimum 10% participation of women voters. Deputy Speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Suriya Bibi, emphasized the importance of cross-party collaborations and the effective utilization of Women Parliamentary Caucuses. She detailed the legislative accomplishments of WPC KP, including the passage of the Child Protection Bill, the Protection Against Harassment of Women Bill, and the Protection Against Domestic Violence Bill. She also underscored the province's initiatives to empower youth, such as the establishment of KP's first-ever Children's Parliament and the formation of the Young Parliamentarians Forum, aimed at empowering young members of the KP Assembly.—APP

## Experts call for global dialogue on Jammu & Kashmir's ongoing struggle

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, hosted a Catalyst Conversation reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering political, moral, and diplomatic support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The discussion reinforced the need for sustained efforts in advocating for their fundamental rights and dignity on the global stage. Session moderator and Research Associate at CASS, Ms. Shaza Arif, highlighted that generations of Kashmiris have suffered under repression, militarisation, enforced disappearances, and severe human rights violations. She pointed out the deteriorating situation following



India's revocation of Articles 370 and 35A on August 5, 2019, which removed Kashmir's special status and facilitated demographic and political manipulation. She further

noted that India's settler-colonial project in Jammu and Kashmir is being implemented through legal and administrative changes, demographic shifts, and technology-enabled

repression. Keynote Speaker, Ms. Farzana Yaqoob, Former Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, reflected on the evolving dynamics of

the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, noting that while it once carried significant costs for India, these have now diminished. She stressed that Pakistan had maintained a magnanimous attitude towards dialogue, but India had shown little interest in engagement, particularly on Kashmir. She also remarked that India's aggression had intensified over time, especially in its challenges to the Indus Waters Treaty, further exacerbating tensions in the region. Despite this, Pakistan had remained steadfast in advocating for Kashmir on international platforms, including the UN, EU, and OIC. She highlighted that Kashmiris, deeply invested in Pakistan, placed more trust in Pakistan than in themselves.

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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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Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# China-Pakistan sports carnival held at NUML

The event aimed to promote people-to-people ties through sports, aligning with the vision of fostering bilateral cooperation, youth engagement, and sustainable sports infrastructure

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China Media Group (CMG) in collaboration with National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and the Embassy of China, successfully organized the China-Pakistan Sports Carnival to commemorate the ongoing Asian Winter Games 2025 in Harbin, China. The event aimed to promote people-to-people ties through sports, aligning with the vision of fostering bilateral cooperation, youth engagement, and sustainable sports infrastructure. The objectives of the event were to strengthen China-Pakistan cooperation in sports and encourage youth participation in athletic activities. The carnival featured competitive games between Chinese students and embassy staff against NUML students in Kabaddi, Ping Pong, Badminton, Tug of War, and Sack Race. NUML students secured victories in Ping Pong and Badminton, while Team



China triumphed in Tug of War. A thrilling Kabaddi match was played between NUML and Iqra University, with Iqra clinching the win after a close contest. Speaking at the event, Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M), emphasized the importance of

sports in fostering a healthy mind and body alongside academics. He underscored the role of sports in strengthening international ties, stating that NUML has been instrumental in cementing people-to-people ties between China and Pakistan. He praised the Chinese students learning

Urdu at NUML, calling them ambassadors of Pakistan. Highlighting Pakistan-China friendship as "deeper than the sea and sweeter than honey," he urged Pakistani youth to learn from China's development model. The Cultural Attache of the Chinese Embassy, Mr. Chen Peng, welcomed President

Asif Ali Zardari's participation in the opening ceremony of Asian Winter Games 2025 in Harbin. He commended the record number of athletes competing in the games, including those from Pakistan, and expressed best wishes for all participants. He noted that beyond language, sports serve as a universal connector, bringing nations and people closer together. He reaffirmed that China-Pakistan friendship continues to grow stronger with each passing day. Director CMG, Ms. Musarrat, an alumna of NUML, highlighted the significance of the Asian Winter Games and the organization of the China-Pakistan Sports Carnival at NUML. She described President Zardari's participation in the inauguration ceremony of Winter Games as a symbol of enduring friendship between the two countries. The event concluded with the distribution of certificates and prizes to the winners and runner-ups, marking a successful celebration of sportsmanship, friendship, and collaboration between China and Pakistan.

## Operations against drug peddlers continues

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police on Wednesday continued operations against drug peddlers and six suspects with more than 8.5 kilograms of charas. According to a police spokesman, the Pirwadhai Police recovered 2.235 kg charas from accused Bilal, while the New Town Police held accused Gul Noor with 1.5 kg of the contraband item. Similarly, the Airport, Bani, Wah Cantt and Wah Saddar Police nabbed accused Saeed Kamran, Hirah Masih, Airat Khan and Ikram respectively on the recovery of 1.48 kg, 1.37 kg, 1.36 kg and 600 grams charas. Meanwhile, five accused were arrested with 35 litres of liquor throughout the district. The Ganjmandi and New Town Police captured accused Aftab and Jibran Tariq recovering five litres of liquor each from them. Likewise, the Naseerabad Police held accused Amjad with five litres and Tahir with 10 litres of liquor, while the Wah Cantt Police recovered 10 litres of liquor from accused Sunil.—APP

## FBISE, PSN to organise teacher training workshop

ISLAMABAD: A training workshop for teachers and management on SLO-Based Examinations will be held on February 12, 2024, at 9:30 AM in the Federal Board Auditorium. This workshop is being organized through a collaboration between the Private Schools Network (PSN) and the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Islamabad, said a press release on Tuesday. According to PSN founder and central president Dr. Muhammad Afzal Babar, around 200 teachers from PSN-affiliated institutions will receive training for the 2025 Secondary Examinations. He highlighted that Federal Board Chairman Professor Dr. Ikram Ali Malik has provided special arrangements for this workshop to help students from low-income private schools perform better in exams. Dr. Babar also mentioned that in the past, their affiliated body, Islamabad Board of Education, conducted pre-board examinations in collaboration with the Federal Board, which significantly eased exam-related challenges for thousands of students. He expressed confidence that this year's workshop will similarly help teachers adapt to the new system.—APP

## Scientific research key to Pakistan's national progress

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General of COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Choudhry Wednesday emphasized that scientific research and technological advancement are the driving forces behind a nation's progress and must be prioritized to ensure sustainable development. In an exclusive interview, he underscored that modern global progress is fundamentally knowledge-driven. "Sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development today is rooted in technology and knowledge, not merely in natural resources," he remarked during an interview with APP. Dr. Choudhry explained that even with abundant natural resources and a large population, a nation's development depends on advancements in relevant technologies and their effective implementation. He asserted that research and development (R&D) are indispensable for Pakistan's progress, particularly in addressing the country's pressing crises in water, energy, and food security. "To overcome these challenges, we must explore technological solutions tailored to our unique circumstances," he stressed. He underscored the importance of technological innovation in addressing social challenges, particularly in education. "To achieve national development, we need to educate the out-of-school children in Pakistan. With our large youth population, rich in creative potential, we must focus on skill development and technology-driven education to prepare them for global and local job markets." Dr. Choudhry further highlighted the need for a robust higher education system and well-established R&D institutions. "Investing in education and research is critical. Unfortunately, in Pakistan's political landscape, science, technology, and education have often been sidelined despite their global recognition as bipartisan priorities." Reflecting on Pakistan's past, he lamented the diminishing support for higher education and R&D due to shifting priorities and economic constraints. "There was a time when higher education thrived in Pakistan, but financial hardships led to reduced funding, deteriorating research capacity, and brain drain, as many of our brightest minds seek opportunities abroad," he noted. He called for urgent action to reverse this trend by promoting higher education, R&D, and technological skills to boost employability and retain talent. Responding to a question on Pakistan's expenditure on scientific research, Dr. Choudhry provided a comparison. "Globally, the average spending on scientific research is 0.8% of GDP. Pakistan allocates less than 0.2%, lagging behind even Sub-Saharan African nations and several Muslim countries, including Bangladesh and the Maldives. Without adequate investment, no country can excel in scientific innovation.—DNA

## Neurosurgeon raises voice for Epilepsy awareness

ISLAMABAD: Renowned neurosurgeon marked 'World Epilepsy Day' by emphasizing the urgent need for public awareness and education on epilepsy, a neurological disorder affecting over two million Pakistanis, which accounts for approximately five percent of the global epilepsy population. Top neurosurgeon Dr. Raza H. Rizvi emphasized the importance of timely treatment for epilepsy, a condition affecting over two million Pakistanis, in an exclusive conversation with a private news channel he highlighted that epilepsy is a treatable condition, but lack of awareness and delayed treatment are significant obstacles to effective management. He comments coincided with the International Epilepsy Day, also known as Purple Day, which is celebrated every year to raise awareness about epilepsy. The day aims to educate people about the condition, reduce stigma and promote support for those affected, he added. Education plays a vital role in dispelling myths and misconceptions surrounding epilepsy, Dr. Rizvi emphasized. He clarified that epilepsy was not contagious, and individuals with the condition are not inherently limited in their abilities or intelligence. In fact, with proper management and support, many people with epilepsy are able to lead full, active, and productive lives, achieving their goals and realizing their potential. However, he stressed that a significant obstacle to effective management is the lack of awareness and delayed treatment, forcing a large number of patients to suffer needlessly. Dr. Rizvi emphasized that epilepsy can be broadly categorized into two types: Primary Epilepsy, also known as Idiopathic Epilepsy, which has no identifiable cause and is often inherited and Secondary Epilepsy, also known as Symptomatic Epilepsy, which is caused by an underlying condition such as head trauma, brain infection, stroke, or tumor.—DNA

## Security forces' efforts lauded in restoring peace in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Wednesday commended the tireless efforts and sacrifices of security forces in restoring peace and stability in Balochistan. During a meeting with the Inspector General (IG) of Balochistan Police in Quetta, he said that the sacrifices made by security personnel in safeguarding the people and ensuring stability will be remembered in history. The meeting focused on the overall security situation, law and order, and measures for public safety in the province. Syedaal Khan stressed the need for a comprehensive strategy to enhance law and order further, calling for effective policies and greater coordination among security institutions

to strengthen public trust. He highlighted Balochistan's crucial role in Pakistan's national stability and progress, asserting that peace in the province is directly linked to the country's overall prosperity. Acknowledging the hardships faced by the people of Balochistan, he reiterated the importance of addressing their concerns on a priority basis to facilitate the province's development. The discussion also underscored the need for police reforms, with a focus on modernizing law enforcement, enhancing professional skills, and upgrading training programs for police officers. Syedaal Khan stressed that equipping law enforcement agencies with modern technology and advanced tools is

essential for effective crime prevention and security management. He reaffirmed that the sacrifices of security personnel would not go in vain and vowed to ensure full government support for efforts aimed at maintaining peace in the region. IG Balochistan briefed the Deputy Chairman Senate on ongoing security initiatives and police reforms, detailing efforts to train law enforcement personnel and equip them with modern technology to combat crime effectively. In response, Syedaal Khan appreciated the IG's efforts and assured the government's full cooperation in maintaining peace. He expressed hope that collaborative efforts would help establish lasting stability in Balochistan.—APP

## ICCI -NEECA host awareness session on electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, underscored the Chamber's dedication to fostering a business-friendly environment that promotes entrepreneurship and economic growth

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) hosted a key awareness session titled 'Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure and Battery Swapping Regulations 2024' at the Chamber House. The event saw a strong turnout from members of the business community, emphasizing the growing interest in the future of electric vehicles (EVs) and sustainable energy solutions in Pakistan. During the welcome address, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, underscored the Chamber's dedication to fostering a business-friendly environment that promotes entrepreneurship and economic growth. He also highlighted ICCI's role in bridging the gap between industry and academia, encouraging fresh graduates to take an entrepreneurial path rather than merely seeking jobs. He stressed the need for Pakistan to embrace modern, sustainable practices in alignment with global trends, noting that effective collaboration between policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation of EV infrastructure regulations. The collaboration between ICCI and NEECA marks a significant step



towards fostering the development of electric vehicle infrastructure in Pakistan, paving the way for a more sustainable and eco-friendly future, he concluded. Dr. Sardar Mohazzam, Managing Director of NEECA, delivered the keynote address, explaining the newly introduced regulations aimed at promoting the establishment of Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and Battery Swapping Stations nationwide. These regulations are designed to accelerate the adoption of EVs in Pakistan by creating a streamlined, supportive ecosystem. Key features of the initiative include a one-window operation for ease of business, cost-effective electricity tariffs for EV

charging, and the encouragement of public-private partnerships to expand the EV network. Dr. Mohazzam also highlighted the importance of ensuring grid readiness, supporting small-scale enterprises, and contributing to Pakistan's emission reduction efforts. Syed Ahsan Abbas, Director of Electrical NEECA, presented a detailed overview of the registration process, operational guidelines, and enforcement mechanisms related to the EV infrastructure. His presentation addressed the attendees' concerns, providing clarity on the regulations and how they will benefit investors and the broader business community.—DNA



### Carnival for a Cause Raises Funds for Underprivileged Students

Carnival for a Cause conducted by Red Maple brought the community together for a fun-filled day dedicated to supporting Rishma Community School, an institution committed to educating underprivileged students. The event featured games, performances, and food stalls, offering entertainment while ensuring that all proceeds went toward enhancing education and resources for the school. With strong community participation, the carnival successfully blended joy with generosity, leaving a lasting impact on young learners.



### Shooting for a Cause



ISLAMABAD: Khazar Farhadov, wife of the Ambassador of Azerbaijan, actively participated in Carnival for a Cause, an event hosted by Red Maple Montessori.



## Briefs

## DIG orders crackdown on illegal arms, land mafia

ISLAMABAD :Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq chaired a high-level meeting on Wednesday to review the crime situation and intensify action against criminal elements. A public relations officer told APP that the meeting was attended by SSP Investigation Muhammad Arsalan Shahzaib, SP City Zone, SDPOs, SHO of Kohsar and Margalla police stations, and investigation officers. DIG Tariq directed officers to launch a decisive crackdown on illegal arms display, land grabbing, drug trafficking, and kite flying. He ordered strict action against offenders involved in serious crimes, emphasizing that absconding suspects must be arrested without delay. Strong evidence collection was stressed to ensure successful prosecutions. Citywide patrolling is to be intensified, with law enforcement tasked with dismantling organized crime networks and apprehending their facilitators. Special attention will be given to curbing motorcycle and vehicle theft, ensuring swift arrests and the recovery of stolen property.—APP

## Kharal credits govt for reviving cricket

ISLAMABAD: PML-N leader Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal on Wednesday welcomed the influx of foreign visitors to Pakistan and the resurgence of cricket in the country, attributing the progress towards stability and growth to the current government's policies. In an exclusive talk with PTV, Kharal credited the government for reviving international cricket in Pakistan and attracting foreign investors. She highlighted that the successful hosting of international cricket events has boosted the country's sports sector.—APP

## ANF recovers over 26 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in three operations recovered over 26 kg drugs worth more than Rs 2.7 million and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 174 grams hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused near Teen Mila Chowk in Attock. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. 2.4 kg ice was recovered from a parcel booked to New Zealand through a courier office in Karachi. In third operation, ANF team recovered 24 kg hashish hidden in a rickshaw near a hotel in Pishin area of Balochistan and an Afghan national was arrested. Separate cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

## 'Landa bazaar' thrives as hub for entrepreneurs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Second-hand market popularly known as 'Landa Bazaar' had undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, evolving into a vibrant hub for entrepreneurial activity that brings buyers and sellers together in a dynamic and thriving marketplace. For small business owners and entrepreneurs, second-hand market had offered a unique opportunity to turn their passions into successful ventures. As a hub for business ventures, second-hand market was breaking down barriers and creating a level playing field for women and men to

pursue their business dreams. By providing a physical space for buyers and sellers to interact, it had created a dynamic ecosystem that fosters innovation, creativity, and growth. Kinza, a young and ambitious businesswoman who had been selling vintage clothing and accessories at second-hand market for the past year shared her experience. She said that "Landa Bazaar had been a game-changer for me and not only has it provided me with a platform to showcase my products, but it has also given me the opportunity to connect with customers and get feedback on my business." She emphasized that starting a business in sec-

ond-hand market doesn't require a hefty investment; even with a modest amount, one can take the first step towards entrepreneurship. She said that second-hand market has become a beacon of entrepreneurial spirit, offering a dynamic space for buyers and sellers to converge, innovate, and grow their businesses. "Whether you were a seasoned business owner or just starting out, second-hand market is a must-visit destination for anyone looking to turn their passions into successful ventures, so come and explore the sights, sounds, and entrepreneurial spirit of Landa Bazaar - you never know what opportunities you might discover, she

stated. Another entrepreneur Talib Khan a skilled craftsman shared his experience said that "Landa Bazaar is more than just a marketplace, it's a community, the other sellers and I support and encourage each other, sharing tips and advice on how to grow our businesses." He told that after struggling to find his footing in previous business ventures, he stumbled upon Landa Bazaar, which became the catalyst for his success as an entrepreneur, and he hasn't looked back since. He encouraged others to take a chance and explore the opportunities available in second-hand market Bazaar, assuring them that it would be a worthwhile endeavor."

## Sector G 8 Markaz full of encroachments

## ICT admin launches operation to clear encroachments across city

Illegal car parking has made it difficult for residents of the area and the way farers to even walk on the footpaths; CDA people allow encroachments after taking 'bribes'

ISLAMABAD: The district administration of Islamabad on Wednesday initiated a large-scale anti-encroachment operation to remove illegal encroachments in which a total of 25 sheds, 62 illegal walls, 70 shutters, and 7 unauthorized washrooms were demolished. The operation took place on New Mall Road Kuri Road, targeted both temporary and permanent encroachments. The operation, conducted in collaboration with the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and local police, aims to restore public spaces and improve urban infrastructure. In this op-

eration, heavy machinery was deployed to demolish unauthorized structures, including shops, walls, and washrooms, which had been causing traffic disruptions and hindering pedestrian movement. The drive, which began after repeated warnings to traders, was part of a broader effort to maintain the city's aesthetic appeal and ensure smooth traffic flow, said the spokesman of ICT administration here. In this regard, the district administration emphasized that the encroachments had not only marred the city's beauty but also created significant obsta-

cles for pedestrians and vehicles alike. Assistant Commissioner Nilore Uzair Ali Khan supervised the operation, ensuring that all illegal structures were removed efficiently. The use of heavy machinery facilitated the swift demolition of encroachments, and the debris was cleared from the site promptly. The reclaimed land will now be used for public purposes, as per the directives of the district administration, he said. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Memon, stated that traders had been given multiple opportunities to vol-

untarily remove their encroachments before the operation began. However, after the deadline passed, the administration was left with no choice but to take strict action. He reiterated that such operations would continue across the city without any discrimination to ensure that public spaces remain free from illegal occupation. The joint operation by the district administration, CDA, and police has been hailed as a significant step toward maintaining order and cleanliness in the federal capital. DC Memon

urged citizens and traders to cooperate with the administration in its efforts to keep the city encroachment-free. He emphasized that the removal of illegal structures is essential for the city's development and the well-being of its residents. The district administration vowed to continue these efforts, ensuring that no area of the city remains unaffected. The drive is expected to enhance the overall urban experience by improving traffic flow, ensuring pedestrian safety, and preserving the city's aesthetic appeal.—Agencies

## Pakistan, Yemen enjoy strong bilateral ties: Gillani

The Yemeni Ambassador acknowledged the strong and valued relationship between Pakistan and Yemen and called for further cooperation in capacity building, scholarships, and international collaboration

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani reaffirmed Pakistan's deep-rooted and fraternal relations with Yemen, emphasizing the shared cultural, historical and religious bonds between the two nations. He expressed these views during a meeting with the Ambassador of Yemen, Mohammed Mottahar Alashabi, in Islamabad on Wednesday. The discussion covered a wide range of topics, with a focus on enhancing bilateral relations, regional stability and economic cooperation. Gilani warmly welcomed the Ambassador and reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for Yemen in its efforts to achieve peace and stability. He highlighted Pakistan's ongoing commitment to providing support through scholarships, capacity-building initiatives and professional training for Yemeni students and officials. He emphasized that Pakistan could extend its expertise to Yemen in key sectors such as climate change, information technology, agriculture, and defense. Regarding regional dynamics, he underscored Pakistan's strategic significance as a nuclear power and highlighted its close ties with China and Turkiye



discussing the Afghan refugee situation the Chairman noted that Pakistan continues to host thousands of Afghan refugees, urging the global community to play its role in addressing this challenge. The Yemeni Ambassador acknowledged the strong and valued relationship between Pakistan and Yemen and called for further cooperation in capacity building, scholarships, and international collaboration. The meeting also reviewed Pakistan's steadfast support for a peaceful resolution to the Yemen conflict, aligning with UN Security Council (UNSC) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) resolutions.

Gilani reaffirmed Pakistan's backing for key peace initiatives, including the Riyadh Agreement of December 2019, and reiterated Pakistan's active role in the OIC Contact Group on Yemen. He stressed the need to expand trade relations and explore investment opportunities between the two countries. He noted that Pakistan's institutions, including NADRA and private sector companies (particularly in IT and construction), could play a significant role in Yemen's reconstruction once peace is restored. He also highlighted the establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC)

to provide a one-window operation for investments in IT, agriculture, mining, and other sectors. Emphasizing the importance of high-level exchanges, Chairman Gilani highlighted the creation of a Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Senate to strengthen people-to-people and inter-parliamentary relations. He extended an invitation to Yemen's parliamentary and ministerial leadership for an official visit to Pakistan to develop a roadmap for future collaboration. He also invited the Ambassador to visit Multan to engage with the business community and explore opportunities for economic cooperation.

## AIUO to hold entry test for M. Phil/ Ph.D

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIUO) will hold written 'entry test' for admission in Ms, M.Phil and Ph.D programs of various disciplines (Semester Spring, 2025) on October 24-27. According to schedule, the Faculty of Education's entry test will be held on February 24, the Faculty of Social Sciences on February 25, the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies on February 26, and the Faculty of Sciences on February 27. The entry tests will take place simultaneously at 9:00 AM in Islamabad at the university's main campus, as well as in the Gilgit-Baltistan, Multan, Karachi, and Quetta regions. Students can choose to take the test at any of these centers according to their convenience. It is important to note that admissions for these programs will remain open until February 17. Admission forms and prospectuses are available on the university's website, and applications can only be submitted online. Passing the entry test and successfully clearing the interview are mandatory for securing admission to these programs. Additionally, admissions for BS programs are also open until February 17. However, BS admissions will be granted purely on a merit basis, with no requirement for an entry test or interview. Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has issued special directives to ensure transparency and strict adherence to merit in the admission process.—DNA

## IFA shares essential tips to stay healthy

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) had issued a health advisory to help citizens make informed food choices during the cold and cough season. The guidelines focus on boosting immunity and maintaining overall well-being through simple dietary adjustments. Talking to APP, Deputy Director of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr. Tahira Siddique emphasized the importance of a balanced diet, hydration, and lifestyle habits to stay healthy during this time. She highlighted that a healthy lifestyle includes consuming whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables. She stressed the need to stay hydrated, exercise regularly, get adequate sleep, and manage stress effectively. Avoiding processed foods, excessive sugar, and smoking can also contribute to better long-term health.—APP

## Pakistan must focus on Int'l IT brands: MD SAP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must focus on the international branding of its IT industry to enhance global competitiveness, said Saquib Ahmad, Managing Director of SAP for Pakistan, Iraq, Bahrain, and Afghanistan. He made these remarks while discussing the digital transformation at Pakistan's leading FMCG company, Tapal Tea, which is embracing cloud innovation through the 'Rise with SAP' initiative. This transformation aims to drive operational excellence, align business strategy, and pave the way for future growth. Through its partnership with SAP, Tapal has transitioned its entire business infrastructure to the cloud, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's FMCG sector. "Pakistan's IT transformation and increased adoption of digital solutions in both public and private sectors indicate significant potential. However, to truly unlock growth, there must

be a structured roadmap with long-term policies," said Saquib Ahmad. He further emphasized that the government must invest in digital literacy, improved regulatory frameworks, and stronger public-private partnerships to accelerate IT sector development. Tapal Tea Private Limited's General Manager for Information Technology, Muhammad Aamir Jamil, expressed confidence in the ongoing digital transformation. "Through this journey, Tapal is fully equipped to stay aligned with modern technology and meet the demands of a rapidly evolving industry. We take pride in leading the adoption of SAP's cutting-edge solutions." As part of its digital roadmap, Tapal also plans to introduce SAP's business intelligence module in the future. This will enhance predictive analytics, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered insights, and operational planning.—APP



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## MPA announces steps to combat human trafficking

ISLAMABAD :The government's crackdown on human trafficking intensified as MPA Uzma Kardar, convener of the Human Trafficking committee warned of zero tolerance for those involved in human trafficking. He announced drastic measures to review policies, launch awareness drives, and issue strict directions to relevant departments to ensure safe and legal migration abroad. In an interview with PTV, Kardar noted that this is the first Human Trafficking Committee formed under the leadership of the Chief Minister of Punjab. In the first meeting of the human trafficking committee, MPA Kardar said that all relevant departments, including the FIA, police, foreign office, social welfare department, deputy commissioners, and international partners were also in attendance. She emphasized that these stakeholders were strictly directed to remain vigilant and ensure that they would be held accountable for any negligence or lapses in their efforts to combat human trafficking. Kardar stressed the dire need to change the mindsets of youngsters and raise awareness about the numerous projects and start-up loan programs announced by Punjab to provide them with better opportunities and alternatives.—APP

## NUST delegation visits parliament house

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of 47 students and faculty members from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) on Wednesday visited the Parliament House as part of an educational tour. The Senate officials warmly welcomed the visitors and facilitated their visit. The delegation was given a tour of the Senate Museum, where they watched a documentary on the history of the Upper House. The students showed keen interest in statues of prominent political figures and historical photographs displayed at the museum. During the visit, the delegation received a detailed briefing on Senate procedures and the legislative process. Later, the students had the opportunity to visit the Senate Hall to observe the workings of the upper legislative chamber. Expressing gratitude to the Senate administration for their hospitality and informative tour, the delegation described the visit as a memorable and enriching experience.



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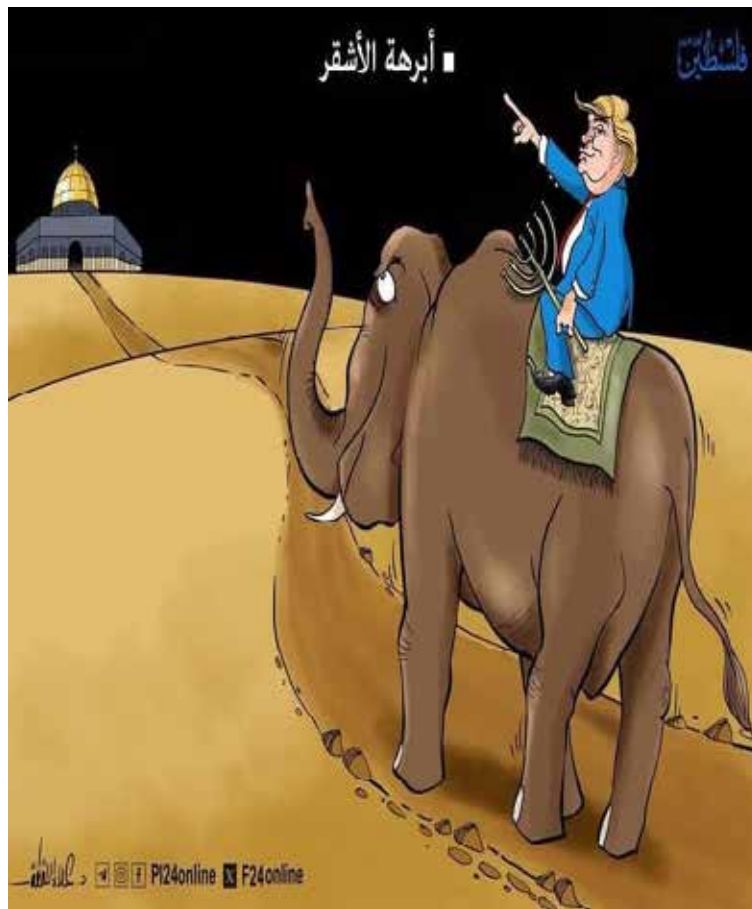
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## US climate U-turn & China

ON his first day back in office, President Donald Trump, as expected, ordered the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement. He also ordered the elimination of government support for electric vehicle targets and reinstated policies favouring domestic oil and gas production. The previous Biden administration made climate change a cornerstone of its domestic agenda and foreign policy, seeking to re-establish the US as a global climate leader. The major shift in US climate and energy policy under Trump will create challenges and opportunities for China's climate diplomacy, as well as its broader economic and security strategies. One of the biggest challenges is the loss of climate change as a key platform in US-China diplomacy. Under Biden, climate cooperation was one of the few areas of engagement in an otherwise tense relationship. Maintaining an approach to China that was "competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be", as former secretary of state Antony Blinken put it in a speech in 2021, climate envoy John Kerry made multiple visits to China, even during heightened tensions. China, however, took the stance that climate cooperation could not be isolated from the broader relationship. In high-level meetings, Chinese officials linked climate negotiations to broader diplomatic concerns, demanding the US ease pressure on China in other areas in exchange. Under Trump, climate cooperation is no longer likely to serve as China's bargaining chip. Despite this, the US withdrawal from climate leadership presents significant opportunities for China. Trump's rollback of Biden-era climate policies is likely to lead to the stagnation, even dismantling, of several climate initiatives, including US climate and energy bilateral partnerships with Germany, India, Japan and Brazil. Similarly, major US banks are withdrawing from climate finance initiatives such as the Net-Zero Banking Alliance, under pressure from Republican lawmakers to distance themselves from industry groups that support carbon cuts. This creates a leadership vacuum that China can step up to, particularly as Chinese support for global climate action has become more crucial. The US U-turn may also reduce international climate pressure on China. Biden's climate diplomacy was equally a tool to strengthen alliances. For example, both the Trade and Technology Council (with the European Union) and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (with Australia, India and Japan) established climate working groups. With Trump likely to deprioritise these initiatives, China may face less international pressure on climate-related issues and gain greater strategic flexibility. Additionally, China's overseas fossil fuel projects, particularly those under the Belt and Road Initiative, were frequent targets of concern during Biden's administration. The US-led Build Back Better World initiative was widely seen as a countermeasure. With Trump less focused on climate cooperation, China may face fewer obstacles in advancing its infrastructure and energy strategies. If China decides to take up a global climate leadership role, it could significantly enhance the competitiveness of its clean energy technologies and standards. It already controls over 80 per cent of the supply chain for solar panels and at least 60 per cent for wind turbines. It also accounts for 75 per cent of the global battery cell manufacturing capacity, and makes about 80 per cent of the world's electric vehicles.



## Trump and his distant predecessor

BY exalting the figure of William McKinley, president of the United States between March 4, 1897 and September 14, 1901, Donald Trump is trying to find in the political history of the United States a universally acclaimed precedent for his controversial policies. McKinley died assassinated, Trump was miraculously spared the same fate on July 13, 2024 in Pennsylvania. But unlike the New Yorker, McKinley was a man of the political class. Except for a short period of two years (1869-1871) when he practiced law, his entire life was spent in the world of politics. At the age of 33, McKinley entered the House of Representatives for the Republican Party. In 1890, he proposed and won approval for a law that increased tariffs on imports. Shortly afterwards, he was elected governor of Ohio and, in 1897, president of the United States. It was during his mandate that the United States became a world power: he achieved the annexation of Hawaii by taking over the four-million dollar debt of the local government, and the following year, he took advantage of the defeat that the Cuban patriots had inflicted on the Spanish army to get involved in the war of Cuban independence and seize that island, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam. The pretext was to "provide aid" to the Cuban patriots, even though they did not need it. However, in order to strip Spain of its territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, Washington needed to enter that war. Since the Cubans did not ask for their help, it was necessary to forge an incident that would infuriate American public opinion and justify US intervention. The self-attack of the battleship Maine (anchored in Havana Bay to evacuate the American citizens living in Cuba) which mysteriously blew up on February 15, 1898, prompted the entry of the United States into a war that had already been won by the Cubans but was taken from them precisely by McKinley. It was under his presidency that the United States went from being a regional power in Central America and the Caribbean, and started to take the first steps in the construction of a global empire. And it is this man, McKinley, a supporter of economic warfare with his tariffs; of direct military action, as in the case of the war against Spain; or appealing to money to buy an island like Hawaii, who has not by chance been repeatedly exalted by Trump. It was he who, having defeated the Spanish monarchy in the Philippines and Guam, ordered the Pentagon cartographers to include those two distant Pacific islands in their new maps of the United States. This brief sketch allows us to decipher and put into perspective some of Trump's initiatives. For example, ordering the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico and renaming it the Gulf of America. His blind trust in import tariffs has its most notable antecedent in McKinley, only that in a world economy as interconnected as the current one, that policy is doomed to a resounding failure, which Trump himself will pay dearly for. As an unscrupulous businessman, he believes that everything has a price, that anything can be bought or sold. Patriotism, honor, or dignity are meaningless words for the Yankee tycoon.

# Geopolitical Conflicts: A Quest to Understand the Struggle of Influence

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Despite its numerous strengths, the book does have some areas for improvement. While the breadth of topics is impressive, the depth of analysis in certain sections could be enhanced. Some discussions, particularly on the Palestine issue and violations of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, could benefit from a more extensive examination of historical grievances, legal dimensions...

DR. Muhammad Akram Zaheer's *Geopolitical Conflicts: A Quest to Understand the Struggle of Influence* presents a comprehensive analysis of contemporary geopolitical dynamics. The book compiles articles previously published in various national and international newspapers, bringing together a wealth of insights into global power struggles. Covering a diverse range of topics—including major powers like the U.S., China, and Russia, as well as regional players such as Pakistan, India, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—this work serves as an essential resource for scholars, policymakers, and informed readers interested in global affairs. One of the book's major strengths is its breadth. It provides a multi-faceted exploration of geopolitics, covering both historical contexts and present-day challenges. The inclusion of various geopolitical flashpoints—ranging from the AUKUS alliance and China-India tensions to Pakistan-Russia relations and the Iran-Saudi rapprochement makes this book a valuable reference for those seeking to understand the complexities of global conflicts. Additionally, the book excels in offering a structured and analytical approach. Each section presents a detailed discussion of the geopolitical significance of a

specific issue, followed by an evaluation of its broader implications. For instance, the chapters on China's foreign policy towards Pakistan and India and the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan critically assess shifting alliances, security dynamics, and economic interests in South Asia. Another key strength of this work is its relevance. The author discusses contemporary issues such as hybrid geopolitics, cyber warfare, and economic coercion, which have become defining elements of modern international relations. By examining these topics, the book underscores the evolving nature of power struggles in the 21st century. Despite its numerous strengths, the book does have some areas for improvement. While the breadth of topics is impressive, the depth of analysis in certain sections could be enhanced. Some discussions, particularly on the Palestine issue and violations of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, could benefit from a more extensive examination of historical grievances, legal dimensions, and international diplomatic efforts. Additionally, while the book effectively highlights the role of major powers, it could delve deeper into the perspectives of smaller but strategically significant nations. For example, Central Asia is discussed in terms of investment

opportunities, but the book could further explore how these nations navigate their geopolitical positioning amid the growing influence of China and Russia. Another notable point is the book's writing style, which is academic yet accessible. However, in some instances, the arguments could be structured more cohesively to enhance readability. Providing more empirical data, such as economic statistics or military expenditure comparisons, would also strengthen the analytical rigor of certain sections. Overall, *Geopolitical Conflicts: A Quest to Understand the Struggle of Influence* is a valuable contribution to the field of international relations and geopolitics. Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer presents a well-researched and thought-provoking analysis of global conflicts, offering insights into both historical trajectories and emerging trends. While the book could benefit from deeper analysis in certain areas and a more structured presentation, it remains an essential read for those interested in understanding the shifting dynamics of global power. This book serves as an important resource for students of political science, international relations professionals, and anyone keen on grasping the complexities of the modern geopolitical landscape.

## Shab-e-Barat: The gateway to spiritual elevation

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Shab-e-Barat also serves as a spiritual prelude to Ramadan, offering an opportunity for self-reflection and renewal of faith. By dedicating time to prayer, repentance, and good deeds, one can cleanse the soul and prepare for the month of fasting with sincerity and devotion. Developing a habit of prayer, seeking forgiveness, and practicing generosity on this night can lead to long-term spiritual benefits, reinforcing discipline and righteousness in everyday life

SHAB-E-BARAT, the illustrious 14th night of Sha'ban, holds profound significance in Islamic tradition. This sacred night, enveloped in divine mercy and celestial blessings, is venerated as an occasion when destinies are inscribed, sins are effaced, and prayers ascend to the heavens. It is a night of spiritual rejuvenation, where believers immerse themselves in supplication, penitence, and profound introspection, seeking absolution and divine favor. The grandeur of Shab-e-Barat is subtly alluded to in the Holy Quran, particularly in Surah Ad-Dukhan (44:3-4), wherein Allah proclaims: "Indeed, We sent it [the Quran] down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind]. Therein [on that night] is made distinct every precise matter." Though scholars diverge in their interpretation of whether this verse pertains to Laylat-ul-Qadr or Shab-e-Barat, many opine that this night is a momentous juncture wherein the divine decree for the forthcoming year is ordained, encompassing matters of life, sustenance, and fortune. The Hadith literature further illuminates the sublime stature of this night. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) eloquently expounded upon its sanctity, affirming that on the 15th night of Sha'ban, Allah's mercy descends upon His creation, and He forgives all except those ensnared in idolatry, enmity, or transgression against their brethren. In another exalted narration, it is conveyed that the Prophet (PBUH) spent this night in fervent prayer, his supplications imbued with humility and devotion, beseeching Allah for the forgiveness of his Ummah. These traditions underscore the magnitude of this night, urging believers to seize its bounteous blessings through piety, penitence, and devout supplication. Shab-e-Barat serves as an epitome of self-reckoning, compelling individuals to scrutinize their deeds, seek atonement for past transgressions, and realign their moral compass. It embodies the quintessence of divine clemency, reminding mankind of the boundless mercy of Allah, who readily absolves those who turn to Him with sincerity. Spending this night in prayer and worship is a means of drawing closer to

the Almighty. Offering voluntary (Nafl) prayers, reciting the Quran, and making heartfelt supplications can bring spiritual peace and strengthen faith. The Prophet (PBUH) himself would engage in prolonged prayers on this night, setting an example for his followers. The remembrance of Allah through Dhikr—reciting SubhanAllah, Alhamdulillah, Allahu Akbar, and La ilaha illallah—fills the heart with tranquility and enhances one's spiritual consciousness. Another significant aspect of Shab-e-Barat is the emphasis on forgiveness—not only seeking it from Allah but also extending it to fellow human beings. It is a night to let go of grudges, mend strained relationships, and purify the heart from resentment. Islam teaches that a believer's faith is incomplete if they do not forgive others and reconcile differences. Strengthening family ties, making amends with those who have been wronged, and ensuring that one's heart is free from ill will align with the teachings of this sacred night. The practice of visiting the graves of loved ones and offering prayers for their souls is also observed on this occasion. Remembering those who have passed away instills a sense of accountability and reminds believers of the fleeting nature of worldly life. It serves as a call to lead a righteous life, mindful of the ultimate return to Allah. Engaging in acts of charity on this night further magnifies its blessings, as kindness towards the less fortunate purifies wealth and attracts divine favor. Shab-e-Barat also serves as a spiritual prelude to Ramadan, offering an opportunity for self-reflection and renewal of faith. By dedicating time to prayer, repentance, and good deeds, one can cleanse the soul and prepare for the month of fasting with sincerity and devotion. Developing a habit of prayer, seeking forgiveness, and practicing generosity on this night can lead to long-term spiritual benefits, reinforcing discipline and righteousness in everyday life. In an era where material pursuits often eclipse spiritual consciousness, Shab-e-Barat emerges as a beacon of divine wisdom, urging mankind to recalibrate their priorities. Devotees spend this night in solemn devotion, offering supererog-

atory prayers, reciting the Quran, and seeking divine favor through earnest supplications. A prevalent tradition involves visiting the resting places of departed souls, offering prayers for their salvation, and contemplating the ephemeral nature of existence. Such practices reinforce the solemn truth that life is but a transient sojourn, and ultimate felicity lies in seeking divine proximity. The lessons derived from this sacred night transcend its temporal bounds, inspiring believers to embody compassion, humility, and mindfulness in their actions. It elucidates the power of dua (supplication), reminding believers that divine decree is subject to Allah's infinite mercy and that sincere prayers can alter the trajectory of one's fate. The night's emphasis on forgiveness fosters a culture of magnanimity and forbearance, eradicating discord and nurturing an ethos of harmony and unity. Furthermore, the realization that every deed is inscribed in celestial annals should inspire individuals to embody righteousness, eschew malevolence, and strive for moral and spiritual refinement. As the crescent moon heralds the advent of Ramadan, Shab-e-Barat serves as a spiritual prelude, a night of purification that prepares the soul for the sanctity of the fasting month. It is a divine invitation to cleanse one's heart, fortify one's faith, and embrace the path of righteousness with renewed vigor. By imbibing the virtues of this hallowed night—devotion, penitence, and altruism—believers can transform not just a solitary night but their entire existence into a testament of piety and virtue. Shab-e-Barat is not merely a night of worship but a profound reminder of life's ultimate purpose. It beckons us to transcend the ephemeral allurements of the material world and strive for spiritual elevation. It is a night that magnifies the infinite mercy of the Almighty, offering mankind an opportunity to secure divine clemency and eternal felicity. By internalizing the ethos of this exalted night, one can cultivate a life of mindfulness, gratitude, and unwavering devotion, drawing ever closer to the Creator and securing His boundless grace in both this world and the Hereafter.



## Briefs

IMF  
resistance  
to power  
tariff cut...

FROM PAGE 01 saying the IMF had acknowledged their efforts. The PM also had the cabinet cheer the team's excellent work for securing the critical bailout. Speaking on Pakistan's ties with Saudi Arabia, Shehbaz said, "Riyadh has always been a trusted and brotherly partner and Pakistan will never compromise on Saudi Arabia's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity." Vowing to further facilitate overseas workers in terms of smoother transactions, the premier also noted a sharp rise in overseas remittances, attributing the surge to the Pakistani diaspora's confidence in the government. Remittances sent to Pakistan surged to \$20.8 billion in the seven months of fiscal year 2025 from \$15.8 billion (31.7 per cent) a year earlier, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said earlier this week, a sign that contributions from overseas workers continue to support the nation's economy. Addressing the recent tragedy in Libya, where several Pakistanis lost their lives in a migrant boat disaster, the PM called for strict action to end human trafficking, saying, "We must wake up and put an end to this dark trade."

PM, IAEA  
chief  
discusses...

FROM PAGE 01 healthcare, and agricultural advancements, contributing to the country's socio-economic growth," the statement read. The PM reaffirmed further collaboration with the IAEA to harness the full potential of atomic technology for peaceful purposes, ensuring continued benefits for both Pakistan and the global community, PID stated. Grossi "appreciated Pakistan's constructive and longstanding engagement with IAEA and said that the organisation would continue to work with Pakistan in the same spirit", the statement concluded. Earlier today, Grossi also called on Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar to discuss the role of nuclear energy in climate mitigation and adaptation, according to a statement from the Foreign Office.

'Army Act  
amend  
cannot...

FROM PAGE 01 arguing that any amendments could compromise fundamental rights. He maintained that for an offence to fall under the Army Act, the offence must be directly related to military service. Providing an example, Raja said that while kite-flying is banned in Punjab, a military officer engaging in the act while at home would not be subject to a military trial but rather civilian law. Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, while addressing Raja, said that during his party's (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) tenure, there was active legislation on the Army Act. Raja, distancing himself from the legislation, said that he had always remained in the opposition and was not part of the PTI back then.

Pakistan into  
tri-series  
final as SA...

FROM PAGE 01 The right-handed batter scored 23 off 19 deliveries with the help of four boundaries. Pakistan's inform opener Fakhar Zaman then stitched a brief 36-run partnership for the second wicket with Saud Shakeel before both perished in quick succession, bringing the total down to 91/3 in 10.4 overs. Fakhar scored 41 off 28 deliveries with the help of six fours and a six, while Saud made a 16-ball 15. Following the slump, Salman Ali Agha joined Mohammad Rizwan in the middle and turned the game on its head by recording the highest partnership for Pakistan in an ODI run chase. The duo added a record 260 runs for the fourth wicket until Lungi Ngidi got rid of Salman on the fifth delivery of the penultimate over.

CJCSC open golf c'ship  
begins at Islamabad

Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami, the Vice Chief of Naval Staff, inaugurated the championship in which a total of 435 golfers from across the country will compete

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The 14th edition of the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) Open Golf Championship kicked off on Wednesday at Margalla Greens Golf Club in Islamabad. The event is being held under the auspices of the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB), Joint Staff Headquarters. Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami, the Vice Chief of Naval Staff, inaugurated the championship in which a total of 435 golfers from across the country will compete in seven categories including professionals, amateurs, senior professionals, junior professionals, amateurs, senior ladies, and juniors. Rear Admiral Azhar Mehmood, President of the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) along with Colonel Ghulam Shabbir Anjum, Secretary SSCB along with other dignitaries shared details of the championship and mentioned that the closing of the championship will be held on February 18. Rear Admiral Azhar Mehmood emphasized that such events help highlight Pakistan's positive image and also highlighted the role of Armed Forces in the promotion of sports in Pakistan. The championship will see participation from top-ranked professional

golfers from around the country. The event has become a platform for fostering healthy competition, providing a

unique opportunity to showcase Pakistan's positive image to the world, while also promoting healthy activity within society.

The Opening Ceremony was attended by civil and military dignitaries, sponsors, golf players, and media representatives.

US Open criticised over  
mixed doubles change

The US Open mixed doubles will be held on 19-20 August, before the hard-court Slam

WASHINGTON: The US Open has received strong criticism following its decision to hold its mixed doubles competition as a standalone event before the start of the Slam from 2025. Organisers said it hoped the move would encourage top singles players to participate in the mixed doubles, which will be held over two days in the week leading up to the start of the main draw in New York. However, the decision has been described as a "profound injustice" by last year's winners Sara Errani and Andrea Pavonisti amid a backlash from players. The US Open mixed doubles will be held on 19-20 August, before the hard-court Slam - which from this year is expanding to a 15-day event - begins on Sunday, 24 August. "Making decisions just following the logic of profit is profoundly wrong in some situations," Italians Errani and Pavonisti said in a joint statement. "In the last few weeks we received

the news that the US Open mixed doubles tournament will be completely turned upside down, cancelled and replaced with a pseudo-exhibition focused only on entertainment and show. "We see it as a profound injustice that disrespects an entire category of players. We don't know at the moment if we'll have the chance to defend our title but we hope this remains an isolated case." The US Open organisers said the change would allow "the sport's biggest stars" to participate in mixed doubles and claimed "excitement is high among the game's stars who have already expressed intent to compete" in the new format. American players Taylor Fritz, the men's world number four, and Jessica Pegula, fifth in the women's rankings, have both expressed their intention to participate, while Holger Rune replied to the US Open's announcement on X saying "Interesting". The US Open's revamped mixed doubles event will

feature 16 teams - the top eight in the rankings plus eight wildcard entrants - and a reduced scoring system. Just four games will be required to win a set in matches before the final, with no-advantage scoring (four points will be needed to win a game) and 10-point match tie-breaks instead of a third set throughout. US Tennis Association (USTA) director Lew Sherr said: "We'll be scheduling mixed doubles on the centre stage and enabling more fans worldwide to enjoy the thrill of watching their favourite stars compete for this coveted title." But there has been a backlash from current and former mixed doubles players. Kristina Mladenovic, winner of multiple Slam titles, said the decision was "terribly shocking". Australian player Elen Perez replied to the US Open on X, saying: "Tell us that you think doubles players are trash, that tradition is over-rated and job opportunity is a thing of the past without actually saying it." - Agencies

Pakistan to  
host ICC  
Women's  
WC qualifiers

The six-team event is likely to be held in April, sources say

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: After the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, Pakistan will host another ICC tournament as the country has been awarded the hosting rights of the World Cup 2025 Qualifiers, sources privy to the development told Geo News on Tuesday. According to the details, the qualifying event will be held in different cities of Pakistan ahead of the mega event, set to be played in India later this year. A total of six teams will participate in the qualifiers, including Bangladesh, Ireland, Scotland, Thailand and West Indies and hosts Pakistan. The sources further suggested that the qualifiers are likely to be held in April and also that the official announcement regarding the schedule of the matches will be announced by the apex cricketing body soon. The finalists of the qualifying event will join the top six teams of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 for the eight-team World Cup.

Australia's CT  
build-up begins  
with SL defeat

Australia were bowled out in 33.5 overs with Theekshana taking 4-40 for Sri Lanka, who failed to qualify for the Champions Trophy

WEB DESK

CANBERRA: Australia's difficult build-up to the Champions Trophy was hit further by a 49-run defeat by Sri Lanka in Colombo. Mitchell Starc became the latest player to withdraw from the tournament earlier on Wednesday and the 50-over world champions were then bowled out for 165 in the first of two matches. Having dismissed Sri Lanka for 215 despite a century from Charith Asalanka, Australia lost opener Matt Short for a duck lbw to the second ball of the chase. Youngsters Jake Fraser-McGurk and Cooper Connolly followed for two and three respectively and Steve Smith, Australia's captain for the Champions Trophy in the absence of injured skipper Pat Cummins, followed for 12. The tourists rebuilt to 83-4 but Marnus Labuschagne fell lbw to spinner Maheesh Theekshana for 15 and Alex Carey was caught in the next over for 41. Australia were bowled out in 33.5 overs with Theekshana taking 4-40 for Sri Lanka, who failed to qualify for the Champions Trophy. Sean Abbott and Spencer Johnson were among those added to the 15-strong Champions Trophy squad, with Starc's withdrawal following injuries to Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Marsh, plus Marcus Stoinis' retirement. Starc's absence further weakens Australia's pace attack for the Champions Trophy, with Cummins and Josh Hazlewood already ruled out. Abbott took 3-61 and Johnson 2-44 in Sri Lanka's 215 all out, as Asalanka dragged the hosts to a decent score with 127 from 126 balls. Asalanka came in at 30-3 and soon witnessed his side slip to 55-5 but his 14 fours and six sixes boosted the score. All-rounder Dunith Wellalage was the next highest scorer with 30. Australia's Champions Trophy campaign begins against England on 22 February. Their second and final ODI against Sri Lanka is on Friday.

COAS hockey  
c'ship's thrilling  
matches continue

The dignitaries praised the high level of skills displayed by the competing teams

DNA

LAHORE: The final round of the COAS Interclub Hockey Championship witnessed three more electrifying matches today, with teams showcasing their skills and determination. In the first match, Tiger Hockey Club Bhawalpur dominated Burni Hockey Club Quetta, winning 7-0. Zubair stole the show with a brilliant hat-trick, while Captain Arshad Liaquat scored two goals and Suleman and Shahzaib Akbar scored one each. The second match saw Bijli Ghar Red Mardan defeat National Hockey Club Karachi 4-1. Captain Zakaria Hayat led from the front, scoring two goals, while M Zaid and Jawwad Khan scored one each. Karachi's Captain Usman Ashraf scored the lone goal for his team. In the third match, Gojra Sports Gojra thrashed Rising Star Hockey Club Islamabad 11-0. Yasir Ali scored a impressive hat-trick, while Azain Abbas, Hasnain, and Shahrooz Khan scored two goals each. M Ahsan and Uzair scored one goal each to complete the rout. The matches were attended by distinguished guests, including Secretary PHF Olympian Rana Mujahid Ali, Tauqeer Dar, Manzoor ul Hasan, Tariq Sheikh, Anjum Saeed, Danish Kaleem, Kamran Ashraf, Muhammad Ali, and others. The dignitaries praised the high level of skills displayed by the competing teams.

Mitchell Starc  
from Champions Trophy

Smith to lead Australia in the eight-team tournament

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Former champions Australia sustained another massive blow ahead of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 as their experienced pacer Mitchell Starc has withdrawn from the upcoming tournament. According to the details, Starc made the decision due to "personal reasons" and has called for privacy regarding it. Notably, the left-arm pacer looked in discomfort in the recently concluded second Test against Sri Lanka in Galle. Australia's chair of selectors George Bailey acknowledged Starc's absence as a 'blow' but also offered his respect for the pacer's decision and highlighted his services for the former champions over the years. "We understand and respect Mitch's decision," Bailey said. "Mitch is deeply respected for his commitment to international cricket and the priority he places on performing for Australia. "His well documented ability to play through pain and adversity, as well as forgoing opportunities in other parts of his career to put his country first should be applauded. His loss is of course a blow for the Champions Trophy campaign but does provide an opportunity to someone else to make a mark on the tournament." Starc's withdrawal serves as yet another setback for Australia, who will already be without their regular captain Pat Cummins, senior pacer



er Josh Hazlewood and all-rounders Mitchell Marsh and Marcus Stoinis. As a result, Australia named Sean Abbott, Ben Dwarshuis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Spencer Johnson and Tanveer Sangha in their final squad for the eight-team tournament. Experienced batter Steve Smith, who recently led Australia to a historic 2-0 clean sweep in the Test series against Sri Lanka will lead the team in the mega event, scheduled to run from February 19 to March 9. Australia will kick off their campaign against arch-rivals England on February 22 before taking on South Africa and Afghanistan on February 25 and 28, respectively.

## Afghanistan team reaches Pakistan for CT-2025

Afghanistan to open their campaign on February 21 against South Africa

DNA

LAHORE: Afghanistan's 15-member squad for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, reached here on Wednesday to participate in the upcoming tournament, scheduled to run from February 19 to March 9. According to the details, the Afghanistan squad will rest today and will kick off their preparations for their maiden appearance in the prestigious tournament tomorrow. The emerging Asian side will kick off their campaign at the newly renovated National Bank Stadium here on February 21 with a match against South Africa. The squad will then travel to Lahore, where they will take on England and Australia on February 26 and 28, respectively. For the unversed, Afghanistan have



emerged as one of the most lethal white-ball sides in the last two years, courtesy of their historic victories over strong oppositions like former champions Pakistan and Australia. They finished sixth in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in India and were one of the semi-finalists of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. Afghanistan stunned Pakistan and England in the 50-over World Cup, while outclassed Australia and New Zealand in the T20 World Cup. Afghanistan squad for Champions Trophy 2025 Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Rahmat Shah (vc), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ikram Alikhail (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Sediqullah Atal, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan, AM Ghazanfar, Noor Ahmad, Fazal Haq Farooqi, Naveed Zadran and Farid Ahmad Malik.

"Govt not  
responsible  
for trade"

FROM PAGE 01 Pakistan's structural reforms. "The details of economic stability are known to everyone, but now we must focus on reforms," he said. The finance minister stressed that affordable and efficient insurance solutions are essential for creating an "insured Pakistan," adding that the country needs modern approaches to life, health, and general insurance. "Climate change discussions at this conference are a great step forward because they play a crucial role in shaping the insurance sector," he noted.

People's  
mandate  
was stolen...

FROM PAGE 01 controversial one in our political history," Abbasi said. He added that most of the people reached parliament after giving bribe in 2024 elections. According to former prime minister, the country cannot progress without rule of law and supremacy of the constitution. He added that corruption is rampant in the country these days and therefore we are lagging behind in every sector. "PML-N lost its popularity when the party deviated from its slogan of 'Respect for Ballot'," said the veteran politician, who was once a close confidant of Nawaz Sharif.

'Negotiations  
will begin  
on Ukraine'

FROM PAGE 01 to be backed up by international troops. Addressing allies eager to hear how much continued support Washington intends to provide to the Ukrainian government, Hegseth indicated that President Donald Trump is determined to get Europe to assume most of the financial and military responsibilities for the defense of Ukraine, including a possible peacekeeping force that would not include U.S. troops. The defense secretary, making the first trip to NATO by a member of the new Trump administration, also said the force should not have Article 5 protections, which could require the U.S. or the 31 other nations of the NATO alliance to come to the aid of those forces if they end up in contact with Russian forces. The secretary's comments were also sure to dim Ukraine's hopes of making itself whole again and to complicate talks later this week between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and U.S. Vice President JD Vance and other senior American officials at a major security conference in Munich.

Imran  
reiterates...  
'election...'

FROM PAGE 01 the military and the public. In his letters, the former premier penned six points and urged the army to reevaluate its policy to win over the public with reasons and suggestions proposed by Imran to remedy the situation. In a statement, Chaudhry quoted Imran as saying that "money launderers were brought to power through election rigging". Imran further said that terrorism was on the rise due to a lack of rule of law, he added. "Imran says at least 1.8 million people have left the country, whereas \$20 billion in capital flew out of the country," he added. Separately, Chaudhry said PTI still stands by the demand for the constitution of judicial commissions on events related to May 9, 2023, events and the events of November 26, 2024.

Pakistan-  
Turk joint  
military...

FROM PAGE 01 at the opening ceremony. These military drills are conducted regularly between the two countries. The purpose of the exercise is to enhance professional skills through joint training. The military exercise aims to strengthen the historical military ties between the two nations, while during its course, the armed forces of both countries will benefit from each other's experiences.



## Briefs

## Rupee sheds 09 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 09 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.25 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.16. 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 279.75 and Rs 281.25, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 2.05 to close at Rs289.71 against the last day's closing of Rs287.66, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.81, whereas an increase of Rs 3.41 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs347.91 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs344.50. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 paise each to close at Rs76.02 and Rs 74.46 respectively.—APP

## Gold price decreases by Rs1,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs 1,600 and was sold at Rs 301,500 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs 303,100 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 1,372 to Rs 258,487 from Rs 259,859 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat came down to Rs 236,955 from Rs 238,212. The prices of per tola silver and that of ten gram remained unchanged and close at Rs 3,312 and Rs 2,839. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$16 to \$2,888 from \$2,904, the Association reported.—APP

## PSX loses 85 points to close at 112,924

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 85.44 points, a negative change of 0.08 percent, closing at 112,924.94 points as compared to 113,010.38 points on the last trading day. A total of 669,597,325 shares were traded during the day as compared to 486,935,003 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs27.904 billion against Rs30.381 billion on the last trading day. As many as 441 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 172 of them recorded gains and 211 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 58 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were B.O. Punjab with 195,542,381 shares at Rs.11.91 per share, Bank Makramah with 46,593,400 shares at Rs.4.18 per share and PTCL with 30,235,783 shares at Rs.24.77 per share.—APP

## Egypt projects 4% growth in 2025 amid strong economic reforms

DUBAI: Egypt is likely to record 4 percent growth at the end of 2025, the nation's Planning and Economic Development Minister Rania Al-Mashat said at the World Governments Summit on Wednesday. In a session titled "The Regional Economic Outlook of 2025," Al-Mashat, presented an optimistic view of Egypt's trajectory amid global challenges. Panelists during the session addressed disruptions Egypt has faced, notably the 70 percent decline in Suez Canal revenues. In addition, they highlighted geopolitical tensions stemming from President Donald Trump's recent threats to displace Palestinians to Egypt and Jordan.—APP

## Russia-Pak focus on coop in energy, industry, transport

Russian envoy said that dialogue on a wide range of common concerns and challenges is already underway within the Moscow Format of Consultations and other multilateral fora that bring together Afghanistan's neighbours

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan, Albert P. Khorev has said that Russia and Pakistan will focus on cooperation in energy and industry, including the modernization of the Karachi Steel Mills, agriculture, and transport, in 2025. Russia stands ready to intensify cooperation with Pakistan on the use of international transport corridors "North-South" and "Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan" the Ambassador said in a

release issued here on Tuesday. Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan, Albert P. Khorev, said this in an interview with the state-owned news organization of Russia, 'TASS News Agency'. In this context, the modernization of the Quetta-Taftan railway line is currently being considered, and increasing maritime cargo transportation also holds promise, he said. He said that both Russia and Pakistan are committed to strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan and countering terrorist threats emanating from its territory. "We support

Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts and reaffirm our focus on strengthening constructive cooperation with Pakistan and Afghanistan," he said. Russian envoy said that dialogue on a wide range of common concerns and challenges is already underway within the Moscow Format of Consultations and other multilateral fora that bring together Afghanistan's neighbours. He said that amid fundamental transformations in global politics and economy, cooperation within the SCO, one of the largest and most important regional

organizations, which is now establishing itself as one of the new centers of power, is becoming increasingly relevant. "We attach great importance to cooperation with Pakistan in enhancing the SCO's economic potential, strengthening industrial cooperation, establishing independent financial institutions and payment mechanisms, expanding transport and logistics capabilities and regional inter-connectivity, as well as countering new challenges and threats," he said. The Ambassador said that Russia also enjoys constructive cooperation with our

Pakistani partners in the United Nations and shares positions on many topical issues on the international agenda, such as information security, prevention of an arms race in outer space, etc. He said that Russia welcomes Pakistan's willingness to become involved in the work of BRICS. At this stage, Pakistan's participation in the activities of the New Development Bank, which has proved to be an effective mechanism for financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and developing countries, looks promising, he said.



BELARUS: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan visits BELAZ facility centre to explore industrial collaboration in mining, heavy machinery and infrastructure development.

## We are gearing towards becoming a multiplanetary species

DUBAI: All the UAE's space projects are gearing toward humanity becoming a multiplanetary species, Salem Al-Marri, director-general of the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center, told the World Governments Summit on Wednesday. Speaking to Arab News, Al-Marri discussed the UAE's partnership with the Saudi space mission. "Having our (Saudi Arabia and the UAE) astronauts in space at the same time is the first time we had that many Arabs in space at one time," he said. Al-Marri said he hoped to have the two countries work together more extensively and share resources to further develop the Arab space industry. "We'd love to have our astronauts visit Saudi along with the Saudi astronauts, Rayyanah Barnawi and Ali Al-Qarni, have some joint outreach activities.—APP

## Bangladesh cuts airfare for Saudi-bound migrant workers

DHAKA: The Bangladeshi government has introduced a special discounted airfare to reduce migration costs for expat workers traveling to Saudi Arabia and other foreign employment destinations, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism said on Wednesday. The decision was issued by the ministry in a circular on Tuesday, directing all airlines and travel agencies operating in the country to provide special fares for Bangladeshis traveling on work visas. "It's an inter-ministerial coordinated decision aimed at reducing the burden on our remittance earners. We have instructed all airlines operating in Bangladesh to adhere to these base fare guidelines," said Abu Naser Khan, additional secretary at the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. "Our migrants have been burdened by the high cost of airfare. Our chief adviser, Prof. Muhammad Yunus, is deeply sympathetic to the plight of migrant workers, and this base fare reduction has been implemented following his guidance and approval." The national flag carrier, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, has already approved the reduced fare scheme, while other carriers need to take measures by the end of next week to decrease ticket prices. "A task force has been formed to monitor the situation on the ground. Led by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, this task force will include representatives from all relevant stakeholders," Khan said. "Bangladeshi migrants who are traveling as new recruits to any country with a smart card issued by the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training are eligible for this opportunity." The decision is to prevent travel agencies from manipulating ticket prices. "There was a trend here in Bangladesh to book the air tickets much earlier without the details of the passengers. This practice creates a crisis in the availability of the tickets, forcing the migrants to pay a high fare," said Afsia Jannat Saleh, secretary general of the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh. "This system was called group booking. The agents booked tickets at the rate of \$300-400, but the migrants needed to pay up to \$900 for a one-way ticket.—APP

## UK to refuse citizenship to undocumented migrants

LONDON: The British government on Wednesday said it was toughening immigration rules to make it almost impossible for undocumented migrants who arrive on small boats to later receive citizenship. Under new guidance migrants arriving by sea, or hidden in the back of vehicles will normally be refused citizenship. "This guidance further strengthens measures to make it clear that anyone who enters the UK illegally, including small boat arrivals, faces having a British citizenship application refused," a Home Office spokesperson said. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government is under pressure to reduce migration after Nigel Farage's anti-immigration Reform UK party won roughly four million votes during the last general election — an unprecedented haul for a far-right party. But the change to the rules has been criticized by some Labour MPs. "If we give someone refugee status, it can't be right to then refuse them a route to become a British citizen," wrote lawmaker Stella Creasy on X, adding that the policy would leave them "forever second class.—APP

## Nerves fray in Turkiye textile sector as Syrian refugees mull return

GAZIANTEP: As excitement swept through the Syrian community after Bashar Assad's overthrow, businesses in Turkiye that rely on them for labor began quickly crunching the numbers. "The Syrians have made a big contribution to the textile sector here. If they leave, there will be a serious labor problem," said Ali Gozcu, reflecting the widespread anxiety gripping Turkiye's textile industry. Gozcu runs ALG Tekstil, a clothing firm in Gaziantep, a southeastern Turkish city that is home to half a million Syrians. "We don't expect a sudden departure, but if it happens, we will suffer a serious loss of labor," he told AFP, adding that 70 percent of his workers were Syrian. And he is not alone. "All of the workers here are Syrian," agreed Yusuf Samil Kandil, a quality controller at Beni Giy clothing, referring to the Unal district where textile firms line the run-down streets and old-fashioned mannequins stand in dusty shopfronts alongside racks of garments. "If the Syrians leave, our labor costs will increase significantly, as well as our production costs," he told AFP. Turkiye is the world's sixth-largest textile manufacturer and its industry is based in the southern regions that host most of its around 2.9 million Syrian migrants. Government figures show that around 100,000 Syrians have work permits, but experts believe about a million Syrians are active in the Turkish economy, mostly in informal, labor-intensive jobs in construction, manufacturing and textiles. Their departure could put a serious dent in the workforce of an industry that is struggling with inflationary pressures and rising costs. So far, just over 81,000 people have returned, interior ministry figures show, although observers expect a surge in June over the Eid Al-Adha holiday. On ALG's factory floor, dozens of young men and women sit hunched over industrial sewing machines or overlockers, churning out thousands of t-shirts. A new Syrian flag hangs on the wall and there is an Arabic notice on the toilet door. Zekeriya Bozo, a 55-year-old worker who wants to return to Syria and "create a new business there" said: "If Syrians leave, there won't be anyone left to work" at ALG. But experts say it is a complicated picture for Syrians, suggesting fears of a mass departure are unfounded due to the uncertainty hanging over a country ravaged by 13 years of war. "Although they're very happy that Assad is gone, that was only one barrier to them going back," said Professor Murat Erdogan, whose Syrians Barometer survey has consistently flagged their concerns about safety, the potential for conflict and Syria's ruined infrastructure. Most have established a life in Turkiye, with more than 970,000 babies born over the past 12 years. Despite tough working conditions, they know they are unlikely to find something better back home, he told AFP. "They told us they have a lot of problems in Turkiye and work very hard for very little money. But if they go back, even if they did find jobs, they said they'll only get \$14 a month," he said. They earn far more than that in Turkiye. "Going back is a huge decision. Because of that, I think a maximum of 20 percent of them will return and that will take a lot of time." Despite the uncertainty, Gozcu is looking into new ways of working that could accommodate the return of some Syrians, nearly half of whom hail from the Aleppo region just across the border from Gaziantep.—APP

## Syrians stuck in camps after finding homes destroyed

ATME, SYRIA: Mehdi Al-Shayesh thought he would quickly resettle in his central Syrian home town after Bashar Assad was ousted, but like many others stuck in camps, he found his home uninhabitable. "We were unbelievably happy when the regime fell," the 40-year-old said from his small, concrete-block house in Atme displacement camp, one of the largest and most crowded in the Idlib area in the northwest. But "when we reached our village" in Hama province "we were disappointed," said the father of four, who has been displaced since 2012. "Our home used to be like a small paradise... but it was hit by bombing." Now it "is no longer habitable," he told AFP. Assad's December 8 ouster sparked the hope of returning for millions of displaced across Syria and refugees abroad. However, many now face the reality of finding their homes and basic infrastructure badly damaged or destroyed. Syria's transitional authorities are counting on international support, particularly from wealthy Gulf Arab states, to rebuild the country after almost 14 years of devastating war. Shayesh said he was happy to see relatives in formerly government-held areas after so many years, but he cannot afford to repair his home so has returned to the northwest. In the icy winter weather, smoke rises from fuel heaters in the sprawling camp near the border with Turkiye. It is home to tens of thousands of people living in close quarters in what were supposed to be temporary structures. Shayesh expressed the hope that reconstruction efforts would take into account that families may have changed significantly during years of displacement. "If we go back to the village now... there will be no home for my five brothers" who are now all married, "and no land to build on," he said, as rain poured outside. "Just as we held out hope that the regime would fall — and thank God, it did — we hope that supportive countries will help people to rebuild and return," he added. Before Assad's overthrow, more than five million people were estimated to live in rebel-held areas in the northwestern Idlib and Aleppo provinces, most of them displaced from elsewhere in Syria. David Carden, UN deputy regional humanitarian coordinator for the Syria crisis, said that "over 71,000 people have departed camps in northwest Syria over the past two months.—APP

## Indonesia, Turkiye agree to set up drone factory during Erdogan's visit

JAKARTA: Indonesian and Turkish defense companies agreed on Wednesday to set up a jointly operated drone factory, as the two countries signed a series of deals during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to the Southeast Asian nation. Erdogan arrived in Indonesia on Tuesday to co-chair with his Indonesian counterpart, Prabowo Subianto, the first meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council — a bilateral mechanism for state-level negotiations. After the council meeting, the two leaders witnessed the signing of a joint venture deal between Turkish drone maker Baykar and Indonesian defense firm Republikorp at the Bogor Palace, West Java. "Indonesia and Turkiye will also strengthen our defense and security cooperation, including education and training for our armed forces, intelligence partnership and counter-terrorism efforts. We also agreed to increase our cooperation and joint production in the defense industry," Prabowo said during a joint press conference. "Our meeting was active and productive, we have the same commitment to strengthen our partnership." The agreement to set up a drone factory in Indonesia was signed by Baykar CEO Haluk Bayraktar and Republikorp Chairman Norman Joeseof. Details of the deal were not immediately available.—APP

## OIC to hold emergency meeting at Iran FM's suggestion

TEHRAN: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is reportedly to hold an emergency meeting of its foreign ministers in response to an Iranian diplomatic initiative, to address the US's "plans" for forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said he had engaged in extensive diplomatic outreach over the recent days, holding discussions with his counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Gambia, which currently holds the OIC's rotating presidency. In an official letter to the OIC Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha, the top diplomat said he had outlined the urgency of convening the meeting to discuss and counter colonial efforts to forci-

bly relocate the Gaza Strip's Palestinian population. Iran's proposal has garnered widespread support from the OIC member states, and the meeting is expected to take place in a few days' time, an IRNA correspondent reported on Wednesday citing an in-

formed source at the Iranian Foreign Ministry. The Islamic Republic's initiative follows US President Donald Trump and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's either announcing or advocating for forced exodus of Gazans to countries such as Egypt,

Jordan, and even Saudi Arabia. Tehran has urged unity among Muslim nations and a collective stance against such measures. "The forced displacement 'plan' is a continuation of colonial efforts to erase Palestine," Araghchi warned, emphasizing the

need for immediate and decisive international action. He further condemned "a blatant attempt to normalize genocide and lawlessness by the occupying regime." The official also denounced recent statements by the Israeli prime minister, who suggested "establishment of a Palestinian state within Saudi territory." Araghchi called these remarks "an unprecedented display of aggression by the occupying regime and a serious threat to regional peace and security." Reaffirming the necessity of collective action, he urged the OIC to take significant steps towards confronting the joint US-Israeli scheme. "The international community, particularly regional and Islamic nations, must implement urgent measures to prevent the legitimization of these criminal acts," he stated.—APP





## Briefs

### ATC sends Afaq on judicial remand

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday rejected the police's request for the physical remand of Mohajir Qaumi Movement-Haqiqi (MQM-H) Chairman Afaq Ahmed in a case related to vehicle arson and ordered that he be sent to jail. Ahmed has been accused in two cases of violence registered in Karachi's Landhi and Awami Colony police stations. According to Superintendent Police (SP) Investigation Korangi Qais Khan, vehicles were set ablaze in Landhi on the politician's instructions. A first information report (FIR) was lodged, with the complainant stating that the suspects physically assaulted him before torching his truck. The complainant further claimed that during the attack, the perpetrators repeatedly said they were acting on the orders of their leader Ahmed, who had said that heavy traffic wouldn't be allowed to enter the city.

### AJK SC lifts disqualification of former PM

DNA

MUZAFFARBAD: The Supreme Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK SC) has lifted the disqualification of former prime minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas. Ilyas, while he was the prime minister, had been disqualified for two years in April 2023 by the AJK High Court. He later filed an appeal in the AJK Supreme Court, seeking relief from the ruling. Ilyas, a loyalist of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), offered an apology for contempt of court before the Supreme Court, which resulted in the reversal of his disqualification. The top court of the region lifted the disqualification just two months before his sentence's term was supposed to end - April 2025. Ilyas had criticised the judiciary during a public gathering for issuing stay orders in cases related to government affairs. Following days of uncertainty after his disqualification, the Legislative Assembly of AJK had elected Chaudhry Anwarul Haq as the new prime minister.

### Saif removed as PTI KP info secy

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr Saif has been removed from his position as PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's general secretary for information. Following his appointment as provincial president, Junaid Akbar has been making structural changes within the party. He has assigned the role of provincial information secretary to Malik Adeel Iqbal, while Advocate Zeeshan has been appointed deputy information secretary. According to the official notification, both appointments have been formally approved and announced.

## Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber unveiled

# APCCI lays foundation for stronger economic alliance

Both our nations have always stood shoulder to shoulder—whether in moments of triumph or challenges



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI), Privatization, and Communication, Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday said the inauguration of Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (APCCI) is the foundation for a stronger economic alliance between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which will enhance the bilateral economic and trade ties between both sides. Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI), Privatization, and Communication, Abdul Aleem Khan addressing the Inauguration ceremony of Azerbaijan-Pakistan chamber of Commerce and Industry (APCCI) as Chief Guest along with others including, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov and Chairman, APCCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari here. The President Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh and Secretary General of FPCCI, Zafar Bakhtawari also addressed the occasion. Meanwhile addressing on the occasion, he said "We stand at the threshold of a new and dynamic chapter in our bilateral relations, with unwavering optimism, I am confident that this Chamber will evolve into a cornerstone of our economic cooperation, usher-

ing in a new era of trade, innovation, and mutual success." Aleem Khan said the APCCI stands as a testament to that enduring friendship, transforming goodwill into tangible economic opportunities. This Chamber is more than an institution and it is a catalyst for innovation, a bridge between ambition and achievement, he said. The Minister said that with ongoing economic reforms, Pakistan is committed to creating a business-friendly environment for Azerbaijani investors and under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif the government is advancing economic diplomacy, with Azerbaijan as a key partner in this vision. The Minister said the responsibility now lies with government bodies, business leaders, and industry stakeholders to transform this potential into tangible economic progress. He said the path ahead is full of promise, but realizing its full potential demands our collective commitment, strategic collaboration, and unwavering confidence in the limitless opportunities that await us. Today, as "We chart a new course, we are reaffirming our commitment to expanding economic horizons and unlocking new avenues of trade and investment. He said that in modern economies fast-paced global economy, sustainable growth depends on strategic partnerships and adaptability. Today, it is not just about the unveiling of an institution;



it is about cementing an economic partnership that is poised to redefine the trajectory of our bilateral relations. Pakistan and Azerbaijan share a bond that extends beyond formal diplomacy; it is rooted in history, mutual respect, and an unwavering commitment to shared prosperity. Both our nations have always stood shoulder to shoulder—whether in moments of triumph or challenges. Pakistan was among the first to recognize Azerbaijan's independence, and since then, our relationship has flourished, strengthened by mutual commitment to regional connectivity, sustainable growth, and strategic collaboration. "I would like to take this moment to extend my deepest appreciation to Ambassador Khazar Farhadov, whose relentless efforts in strengthening the Azerbaijan-Pakistan partnership have been instrumental in bringing us to this milestone," he said. Meanwhile on the occasion, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov expressed his deep fraternal sentiments towards Abdul Aleem Khan and mentioned that both countries were taking steps to enhance bilateral cooperation. The Ambassador expressed confidence that Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry would further increase the existing \$ 2 billion investment volume between the two countries. Chairman of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of

Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that annual bilateral trade of \$ 100 million between Azerbaijan and Pakistan is not according to the potential and efforts needed to enhance the bilateral trade up \$1 billion in next five years. He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming visit to Azerbaijan proved to be a catalyst in bilateral economic and trade ties between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. On this occasion, he reiterated his determination that he will take the bilateral economic and trade ties between both nations to the highest level through this potential platform of APCCI. The President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram addressing the ceremony, hailed the establishment of the APCCI and highlighted its role in introducing Pakistani products to Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries. Meanwhile, on the occasion, Secretary General of FPCCI, highlighted the different aspects of Azerbaijan and Pakistan relation and praised the Federal Minister's efforts for promoting bilateral ties of the two friend countries. At the end of the inauguration ceremony, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan as the Chief Guest cut the ceremonial cake and congratulated the Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov and all the attendees.

## Pakistan and UK vow to strengthen economic coop

Finance Minister further highlighted the government's commitment to fiscal discipline, economic stability, and sustainable growth

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Jane Marriott CMG OBE, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, called on the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, at Finance division today. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of mutual interest, includ-

ing ongoing economic reforms, financial cooperation, and initiatives under the UK's support programmes in Pakistan. Finance Minister gave an overview of the economy and shared update on the government's reform agenda with focus on carrying on with the macroeconomic stability and leading the economy on the path to export-led growth. The Finance Minister further highlighted the government's commitment to fiscal discipline, economic stability, and sustainable growth. He also appreciated the UK's continued support through various development and governance programmes. Ms. Marriott reaffirmed the UK's strong partnership with Pakistan and reiterated the commitment to further strengthening bilateral economic ties. She also underscored the importance of continued collaboration in key areas such as public financial management, revenue mobilization, and economic resilience. She also provided insights into the progress of the REMIT Programme, which aims to enhance revenue mobilization and institutional transparency in Pakistan. The Finance Minister acknowledged the programme's contributions and stressed the need for sustained technical assistance and capacity-building efforts. Both sides agreed to continue working closely to enhance economic cooperation and explore new avenues for collaboration.

## Imran Khan expels Marwat from party

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has ordered immediate expulsion of firebrand leader Sher Afzal Marwat from the party owing to his continued violation of party discipline, sources told Geo News. The directives were issued during a meeting between the PTI leaders and ex-premier Khan at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail during the hearing of the GHQ attack case. The leaders who met the PTI founder include Omar Ayub Khan, Shibli Faraz, and Senator Ali Zafar where they complained about Marwat's behaviour at the Swabi public gathering last week. The former ruling party had organised a protest rally in Swabi against alleged election rigging on February 8 where Marwat was reportedly not allowed to come on the stage, however, he managed to deliver a speech after being called to the stage by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. Addressing the rally, Marwat, in a cryptic way, said that "bad people" always became helpful during "bad times", but some "good people in good times" have zipped their lips. Pointing towards Gandapur, the lawmaker said that the chief minister would speak on behalf of people like him.

## Dishonest leadership shook Pakistan's foundations: Nawaz

'A dishonest leader who came to power through deceit shook the very foundations of Pakistan,' Sharif claimed

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has accused a former political rival of weakening the country's foundations, asserting that his party is now working to restore economic stability. Addressing a gathering of PML-N's Punjab Assembly members in Lahore, Sharif outlined what he described as his party's achievements in reversing the country's economic decline. Without naming names, the former premier took a veiled dig at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, blaming him for misgovernance and economic mismanagement. "A dishonest leader who came to power

through deceit shook the very foundations of Pakistan," Sharif claimed. "But we made sacrifices for this country in the past, and we will continue to do so for its progress." He pointed to a series of recent economic improvements, including a drop in inflation, a surge in the stock market, and a strengthening of the Pakistani rupee. According to Sharif, these indicators reflect the positive impact of PML-N's policies and governance. Sharif praised his younger brother, former Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, for spearheading efforts to stabilise the economy, adding that even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has acknowledged Pakistan's financial recovery. "We have turned the tide from economic decline towards progress," he said. "Interest rates have dropped from 22% to 12%, boosting business activity and economic growth. Pakistan is finally coming out of the darkness."

## Pakistan, Rwanda explore avenues for Air Force coop

The Air Chief reiterated PAF's unwavering support to provide capacity-building assistance to the Rwandan Air Force in upgradation of its human resource, maintenance parameters and operational training



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A high-level defence delegation of the Republic of Rwanda led by Lieutenant General Jean Jacques Mupenzi, Rwandan Air

Force Chief of Staff, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. The visit marked a significant step towards establishing a foundation of longstanding

Air Force to Air Force ties between both the countries through exploration of new avenues for cooperation in joint training initiatives. Upon his arrival, a smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to Lieutenant General Jean Jacques Mupenzi. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff shared insight into various ongoing modernization projects of Pakistan Air Force's operational construct, force goals and plans for the force structure with a keen focus on future warfare. The Air Chief reiterated PAF's unwavering support to provide capacity-building assistance to the Rwandan Air Force in upgradation of its human resource, maintenance parameters and operational training.



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