



# Islamabad POST

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**Dar calls for united Muslim effort to support Palestine**

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**Mushahid hails Trump's economic vision**

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**Rizwan urges Pakistan is to enjoy CT 2025**

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## PM vows to root out terrorism

# Govt committed to achieve \$5 bn trade target with Turkiye

The prime minister, about his meeting with a delegation of World Bank directors, said that they had unanimously expressed their satisfaction over the reforms agenda and the macro-economic stability

ANSAR M BHATTI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that Pakistan and Turkiye were two brotherly nations and they were committed to take the bilateral trade volume between the two countries to \$5 billion mark. Addressing a meeting of the cabinet, the prime minister referred to the recent visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and said that he had always supported Pakistan at all global fora. He said, "President Erdogan had been a strong voice for Palestine and Kashmir. Pakistan and Turkiye enjoy brotherly ties and both countries also hold regular consultations and support each other at all fora." The prime minister said that a number of MoUs were also signed during Turkish president's visit and urged the ministry of commerce and other relevant ministries to work jointly for the achievement of bilateral trade mark of 5 billion dollars. He said that a flyover which was completed in 84 days in Islamabad was named after President Tayyip Erdogan as a sign of affection by the people of Pakistan. The prime minister also welcomed a recent Gallop's survey, according to which about 55 percent of people had reposed confidence in the government's pro-business policies.

However, he stressed that they had to move forward and work hard to accomplish the economic agenda and its key components including Uraan Pakistan. The prime minister, about his meeting with a delegation of World Bank directors, said that they had unanimously expressed their satisfaction over the reforms agenda and the macro-economic stability. They had praised the government and its credit went to every member of the cabinet, he added.

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## Pakistan can bridge gap between China and US: Bilawal

PPP chief describes Trump as a "dealmaker" and suggests that Pakistan could successfully engage with him

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has the potential to act as a bridge between the United States and China, said Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during an interview with German television on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. "Going forward we'd like to see ourselves as a country that can bridge that gap rather than sort of increase that division," the PPP chairman said. Bilawal highlighted Pakistan's long-standing role in fostering diplomatic ties between nations and stressed that some nations were taking advantage of the competitive situation between Washington and Beijing. "There are some countries who are profiting or benefiting from the fact that these two countries, the United States and China increasingly competitive but Pakistan has been in a different position," he said. He also expressed optimism about the prospect of improving ties with India,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Turkiye Ambassador to Pakistan Irfan Naziroglu unveil the plaque of operationalization of Recep Tayyip Erdogan Interchange. – DNA

## 30 terrorists killed in South Waziristan operation

Security forces determined to wipe out menace of terrorism from country, says ISPR

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Security forces killed at least 30 terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) South Waziristan district, the military's media wing said on Tuesday. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), "On 17 February 2025, security forces conducted an operation in general area Sarogha of South Waziristan District on the reported presence of Khwarij." During the conduct of the operation, it said, the security forces effectively engaged the terrorists' location,

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## No global ban on civilians military trials: SC judge

Justice Jamal Mandokhail questions consequences of violating international principles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan has observed that the court martial of civilians is not barred under international principles. His remarks came during the hearing of an intra-court appeal against military trials of civilians. A seven-member constitutional bench, led by Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan,

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## 'PTI founder fit and healthy'

# Imran adamant 'won't cut any deal' come what may

Aleema Khan rejects media reports about Khan's health saying PTI founder fit and healthy

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has reiterated his stance saying that he will not strike any deal with the government, no matter how much pressure is applied, Aleema Khan quoted the party founder as saying on Tuesday after meeting her brother in Adiala jail. The defiant PTI founder's remarks came amid reports circulating on social and electronic media that the former ruling party was once again seeking backchannel talks with the establishment, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur reportedly playing a key role in the effort. Gandapur is using his connections to revive the dialogue. The source insisted that PTI is eager to restart the process and views Gandapur as the central figure who can make it happen. So far, there is no indication that the other side is willing to engage.

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## PTI vows to repeal 26th amend if returns to power

He accused the government of failing to uphold the rule of law

DNA

PESHAWAR: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and PTI leader Omar Ayub has announced that his party would abolish the 26th constitutional amendment upon returning to power. Speaking to the media outside the Peshawar High Court, Ayub criticised the government for registering numerous "fake cases" against PTI workers and leaders. He stated that PTI has no communication with

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## Briefs

### Siraj slams policies on Kabul

"If a province is talking to Afghanistan today, it might negotiate with India tomorrow"

SHAMIM SHAHID

MARDAN: Former Jamaat-e-Islami emir Siraj Haq has stated the deteriorating relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are disastrous for both countries. Speaking to the media in Mardan, he said that a provincial government's jirga cannot succeed without the federal government's support, and holding negotiations with Afghanistan without the center's involvement goes against national policy. "If a province is talking to Afghanistan today, it might negotiate with India tomorrow," he maintained. He also commented that "Mujhe Kyun Nikala" phrase had become popular and predicted that Shehbaz Sharif would soon be chanting it.

### Pak announces launch its first lunar mission

The Chang'E 8 mission, scheduled for launch in 2028, will focus on robotic exploration of the lunar south pole

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first moon rover mission is set to launch in 2028, announced Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) on Tuesday. The development follows after Pakistan and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) allowing Pakistan's first lunar rover to be part of China's Chang'E 8 mission. The Chang'E 8 mission, scheduled for launch in 2028, will focus on robotic exploration of the lunar south pole. To engage the public in this historic venture, SUPARCO has opened a nationwide competition to name the Pakistan moon rover.

## Cementing brotherly bonds Uzbekistan work visa now open for Pakistani people

The decision came as PM will pay an official visit to Uzbekistan in the last week of February

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Work opportunities in Uzbekistan have resumed for Pakistani citizens following a brief hiatus. The federal government has lifted the ban on Pakistani workers, allowing them to seek employment in Uzbekistan, after the Pakistan Embassy in Tashkent recommended the removal of the restriction. The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) has issued a circular in this regard, confirming that the Pakistan Embassy in Tashkent has proposed the registration of workers to facilitate their foreign employment in Uzbekistan. In light of this, the BEOE has directed all Protectorates of Emigrants to register workers for Uzbekistan, ensuring the protection of the interests of intending emigrants. The decision came as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will pay an official visit to Uzbekistan in the last week of February 2025.

The prime minister will stay in Uzbekistan for two days. Pakistani citizens planning to work in Uzbekistan are legally required to obtain visa protection from the concerned department to ensure legal protection in the host country. Visa protection provides several key benefits to holders, including complete legal protection and entitlement to full assistance from Pakistan's mission.

Protector Fee in Pakistan for Uzbekistan Work Visa Each Pakistani worker must pay the following fees: Fee Structure of Emigrants through Direct Employment, Insurance Fee: Rs2,500, Life (covers life risk for up to Rs1 million for five years), OPF Welfare Fund Fee: Rs4,000, Registration Fee: Rs2,500, OEC Fee: Rs200, Total Fee: Rs9,200, Fee Structure of Emigrants through Overseas Employment Promoter (OEP), Life Insurance Fee: Rs2,500, OEP Service Charges: Rs15,000 (additional Rs6,000 for processing cases), Registration Fee: Rs500, OEC Fee: Rs200, Welfare Fund (OPF): Rs4000, Total Fee: Rs22,200.

# Pakistan and China reaffirm 'ironclad' friendship

Thanking China for its steadfast and continued support to Pakistan's integrity, sovereignty and core issues including Jammu and Kashmir dispute

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar met Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi in the New York at the sidelines of Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Security Council. The meeting between the two leaders was marked by traditional warmth and cordiality, as is the hallmark of Pakistan-China friendship. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the entire range of bilateral relations including CPEC. Global and regional issues of shared interest were also discussed. Expressing satisfaction at the positive trajectory of bilateral relations, the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister said that friendship with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. There is unanimous support in Pakistan for further enhancement of bilateral ties. Reaffirming Pakistan's support to China on its core issues, the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister underscored that Pakistan-China cooperation is pivotal for regional peace and stability and prosperity. Thanking China for its steadfast and continued support to

Continued on Page 06

## Russia, US agree to work toward ending Ukraine war

The talks could lead to a summit later this month between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin

FOREIGN DESK

RIYADH: Russia and the US have agreed to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday. Rubio said that the two sides agreed broadly to pursue three goals: to restore staffing at their respective embassies in Washington and Moscow, to create a high-level team to support Ukraine peace talks, and to explore closer relations and economic cooperation.

Continued on Page 06



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## Big Catch-Up vaccination campaign launched in KP

PESHAWAR: Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has launched a province-wide vaccination campaign, "Big Catch-Up", aimed at immunizing children under the age of 5 against 12 deadly diseases. The campaign was inaugurated by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Advisor, Ihtisham Ali, at the Molvi Ameer Shah Memorial Hospital in Peshawar. The 12-day campaign will target 78,000 zero-dose children and 1.2 million children who have received one or two doses of vaccines. "The 'Big Catch-Up' campaign is a critical effort to protect our children from vaccine-preventable diseases," said Ihtisham Ali. "We urge all parents to get their children vaccinated and play their part in keeping our communities healthy and safe." Director EPI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Asghar Khan, emphasized that the campaign will focus on reaching children who missed their vaccinations due to COVID-19 or other reasons. "Our teams will visit fixed centers, schools, and communities to ensure that all eligible children are vaccinated," said Dr. Asghar Khan. "We appeal to all parents to cooperate with our teams and get their children vaccinated." The "Big Catch-Up" campaign is supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and other partners. On this occasion Coordinator Emergency Operation Centre Basit Ali, Medical Superintendent Molvi Jee Hospital Dr Sher Khan Afridi, Pakistan Pediatrics Association President Dr Bawar Shah, CFO Unicef Radek, Unicef Health Team Lead KP Dr Inamullah Khan, Deputy Director EPI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr Mehtab, WHO team lead Dr Babar Alam, Health Department and Unicef representatives attended the ceremony.—APP

## Accused supplying drugs in educational institutions held

RAWALPINDI: The Civil Lines Police on Tuesday arrested a drugs supplier distributing the contraband items in different areas of the city, including educational institutions. According to a Rawalpindi Police spokesman, some 200 grams of ice and 1.8 kilograms of charas were recovered from the accused identified as Zaheer. During initial investigation, the accused revealed that he supplied drugs in different areas of the city, including educational institutions. The accused was wanted in many drug cases registered at different police stations, the spokesman said. Meanwhile, Chautra Police nabbed accused Shoaib with 550 grams of charas while the Kallar Syedan Police also recovered 500 grams of the contraband item from accused Umar Aslam. Similarly, six liquor suppliers were netted by the police in operations in different areas. The Waris Khan Police held two accused Mohib Abbas and Abdul Hammed recovering five litres of liquor each from them.—APP

# Movenpick Islamabad unveils Pan-Asian fine dining experience

Zen Asia offers a curated selection of exquisite dishes from China, Japan, and Thailand, blending authenticity with innovation. Each dish is crafted with precision, served in an ambiance that seamlessly fuses elegance with breathtaking natural and urban vistas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: D Mövenpick Hotel Centaurus Islamabad, the city's premier high-rise hotel, welcomed ambassadors, dignitaries, and esteemed guests to celebrate the grand opening of Zen Asia, an extraordinary Pan-Asian restaurant on the 21st floor. The event was graced by Senator Mushahid Hussain as the Chief Guest, who commended Mövenpick's dedication to elevating Islamabad's hospitality landscape with world-class dining experiences. Zen Asia offers a curated selection of exquisite dishes from China, Japan, and Thailand, blending authenticity with innovation. Each dish is crafted with precision, served in an ambiance that seamlessly fuses elegance with breathtaking natural and urban vistas. Leading the culinary team is Chinese Executive Chef Liang Rui, whose extensive global experience positions Zen Asia as a game-changer in Islamabad's dynamic food and beverage scene. Speaking at the inauguration, Nicolas Verdun, General Manager of Mövenpick Hotel Centaurus Islamabad, expressed his excitement: "We are thrilled to



introduce this exceptional dining experience to Islamabad. Our teams have worked tirelessly to create a premium journey for our guests, ensuring excel-

lence at every step. We invite food lovers and connoisseurs to explore the extraordinary flavors of Zen Asia—it's truly worth it." Strategically located in the heart

of Islamabad, Zen Asia offers an unrivaled setting with sweeping views of the Margalla Hills and the city's picturesque skyline. With its fusion of world-class ser-

vice, culinary artistry, and a captivating ambiance, this new restaurant is set to become a landmark destination for fine dining in the capital.

## Farmers' gathering focuses on better wheat production

SIALKOT: A big farmers' gathering was organised by the Department of Agriculture Extension, Sialkot district, at village Partan-wali, Union Council Vario, regarding better wheat production. The program was attended by Deputy Director Agriculture (Extension) Sialkot Dr. Rana Qurban Ali Khan, officers of the Department of Agriculture and others. Dr. Rana Qurban Ali Khan gave a detailed briefing about wheat cultivation and various schemes and subsidies issued by the Department of Agriculture for farmers. He also told the farmers about wheat production competitions, Kissan Card, Green Tractor Scheme. He provided information about irrigation in view of the recent dry season. He made recommendations to the District Officers of the Department of Agriculture Pest Warning regarding research on biopesticides and the use of biopesticides against pests and diseases in crops. A large number of farmers participated and appreciated the efforts of the Agriculture Department.—APP

## Kundi hosts colorful art exhibition

The governor said "Art is not just a combination of colors and images; it is a language that speaks to the soul. Such exhibitions are the perfect platform to bring out the talents of our youth

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Tuesday organized a one-day vibrant art exhibition at the Governor House to highlight the province's rich culture through various art pieces and products. The exhibition was inaugurated in the presence of Chief Guest, renowned artist Yusuf Bashir Qureshi, and Vice Chairperson of Punjab Social Protection Authority Jahan Ara and senior politician Manzoor Wattoo. Governor Kundi toured various stalls showcasing products created by female students from different universities. The products, which reflected the rich culture and traditions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, were highly appreciated, and the students were encouraged to continue their creative pursuits. Speaking at the event, Governor Kundi expressed his pride in hosting the art exhibition at

the Governor House. He emphasized that the exhibition highlighted the province's rich culture through various art pieces and products. "Art is not just a combination of colors and images; it is a language that speaks to the soul. Such exhibitions are the perfect platform to bring out the talents of our youth," he said. He further stressed the importance of promoting the soft image of the province to counter the challenges of terrorism and extremism, emphasizing that highlighting the cultural heritage and traditions of the province is essential. "Our history, culture, and traditions define us, and promoting these values is crucial in shaping a peaceful and developed society," said the Governor. Governor Kundi also underscored the significance of empowering women for the development of society. "No society can progress without the empowerment of women. We must provide our youth, especially female students, with opportunities in education, art, and business," he added.

## Pakistan earns \$1b from IT services' export during Jul-Dec

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$1.864 billion by exporting different Information Technology (IT) services in various countries during the first six months of the current fiscal year 2024-25. This shows a growth of 28.04 percent as compared with the US \$ 1.455 billion earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2023-24, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the computer services grew by 34.54 percent as it surged from US \$1.175 billion last year to US \$1.581 billion during July-December 2024-25. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 35.73 percent, from US \$405.160 million to US \$549.912 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services however witnessed a decline of 7.84 percent, from US \$3.129 million to US \$2.884 million. The export and imports of computer software services also decreased by 5.18 percent, from \$311.331 million to \$295.203 million whereas the exports of other computer services witnessed a growth of 61.04 percent from US \$454.812 million to US \$732.430 million. Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review also increased by 746.93 percent growing from US \$1.755 million to US \$14.871 million. Among the information services, the exports of news agency services up by 1240.84 percent, from US \$1.037 million to US \$13.909 million whereas the exports of other information services also rose by 33.87 percent, from US \$0.718 million to US \$0.961 million. The data revealed that the export of telecommunication services decreased by 3.90 percent as these came down from US \$278.681 million to US \$267.825 million. — Agencies

## PFUJ leadership receives greetings from political and social figures

DNA

LAHORE: The recently elected office bearers of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) have received congratulations and best wishes from prominent political and social figures across the country. The newly elected

leadership includes President Rana Azeem, Secretary General Shakeel Ahmad, Finance Secretary Sher Bano, Vice Presidents Qaiser Mirza, Farhat Fatima Assistant Secretary General Qazi Rizwan and Furqan rao. Distinguished leaders such as Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yusuf Raja

Gilani, PML-Q Chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party Chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai, and several other key political and social personalities extended their felicitations to the newly elected PFUJ leadership. They expressed their hope that the new PFUJ body will play a crucial role in safeguarding journalists' rights and addressing their challenges effectively. The leaders emphasized that journalists serve as the eyes and ears of society, and it is their duty to convey the realities of societal changes to the public. They further hoped that the PFUJ leadership would actively contribute to social reform and uphold the principles of press freedom and journalists' welfare. It is noteworthy that the IFJ President personally monitored the entire election process and expressed satisfaction with the proper conduct of elections by associations, considering it a commendable step forward.



## Haider sees news pathways of love in Bangladesh journalists' visit

DNA

LAHORE: A 10-member media delegation from Bangladesh called on Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan and expressed the desire to foster bilateral relations in all sectors and people-to-people ties during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Tuesday. Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan welcomed the guests to the Governor's House and said that their arrival was a matter of pride for him. He expressed the hope that the visiting journalists will present a true picture of Pakistan on their return. The journalists from Bangladesh are on a week-long good-will visit to Pakistan and exploring the historical city of Lahore during the

second-leg of their tour. The delegation spent four days in federal capital Islamabad and visited many places of historical significance in the first-leg of their sojourn. Director General Press Information Department (PID) Lahore, Shafiqat Abbas Khan, was present during the meeting. Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that new vistas of cooperation will open under the interim government in Bangladesh, adding that more reciprocal visits in different sectors will usher in a new era of cooperation between the two countries. He further stressed the need of setting up Urdu and Bangla language chairs in Pakistani and Bangladeshi universities, adding there was need for better understanding of each other and such visits were vital to the ideal of traversing new trails of love. Head of the

Bangladesh media delegation Fakhr ul Alam Khan thanked Governor Sardar Saleem Haider for inviting them to the historic Governor's House. He said that Pakistan and Bangladesh shared common history, culture and faith, adding there was need to find common grounds of cooperation between the two countries. He said the delegation comprised journalists from the print and electronic media houses in Bangladesh, adding they see a tide of renewed relationship with Pakistan after the recent revolution in Bangladesh. The media delegation invited Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan to visit Bangladesh, adding that they were bewitched by the beauty of the country, especially the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The members of the Bangladesh media delegation presented a souvenir to Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan.

## TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Quotations are requested from specialist suppliers of "Electronic/Artificial Intelligence Lab Items, Machine Shop Consumables & Ion Generator" having valid GST and NTN certificate and also on ATL (Active Tax payer list) with adequate relevant experience & capabilities for the below captioned Tender.

S #	Tender Description	Qty	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Quotation Submission Date	Tender Opening Date/Time
1.	Electronics/AI Items (Indent # 133)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
2.	Electronics/AI Items (Indent # 134)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
3.	Electronics/ AI items (Indent # 135)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
4.	Electronics/ AI items (Indent # 136)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
5.	Electronics/ AI items (Indent # 137)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
6.	Electronics/AI Items (Indent #151)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
7.	Electronics/AI Items (Indent #152)	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
8.	Machine Shop Consumables	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs
9.	Ion Generator & Monitoring Equipment	Misc	03/03/2025 at 1200 hrs	04/03/2025 On or Before 1130 hrs	04/03/2025 at 1200 hrs

Bidding Procedure: Single Stage - One Envelope Procedure:

### Terms & Conditions:

- Sealed Quotation to be submitted to GM Procurement on or before March 04, 2025 till 1130 Hrs after which no bid will be accepted. Bids will be opened at 1200 hrs on March 04, 2025. The wording "Quotation of Electronics/AI Lab Items, Machine Shop Consumables and Ion Generator & Monitoring Equipment" and "Do Not Open Before 1200 hours, on March 04, 2025" to be written on top right corner of envelope for each tender.
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- Only Specialist/market leaders of Electronics suppliers & Machines Shop Consumable experts are requested to submit bid against above captioned Tender. General Order suppliers bid shall not be entertained.
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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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### Emergency

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PIMS.....	9261170-79
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Shifa International	4603666



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RDA.....	5555864
TMA.....	5770886
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### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Pakistan offers 40 offshore, 31 onshore blocks

The minister also reiterated that reducing energy prices for the underprivileged is one of the government's top priorities, and efforts are underway in this regard

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Dr. Musadik Malik said on Tuesday that, after a decade, 40 new offshore and 31 onshore blocks have been offered for oil and gas exploration. Speaking at the 30th Annual Technical Conference and Oil Show, he said that a significant portion of Pakistan's natural resources remains unexplored and invited international investors to capitalize on the opportunities in these newly opened blocks. "Pakistan is open for business, and we will provide all necessary facilitation to investors," he assured. He said that the fundamental pillars of the government's strategy for advancing the energy sector are Access to Energy, Provision of Affordable Energy, and Sustainability of Energy. The Minister further explained that to achieve these goals, the government is focusing on three key fronts including, indigenization, electrification, and liberalization. He also shared plans to introduce a policy of deregulation and price capping to open up the oil sector, said that bringing technology to the country alone would not be enough to change its destiny. "Continuous innovation is essential for sustainable progress," the minister added. He stressed the importance of transitioning the oil sector



to modern technology, noting that the Prime Minister's vision is for Pakistanis to live better and easier lives. "Prosperity will not come by simply introducing one machine; for sustainable growth, we must engage in science and research ourselves," he said. The minister also reiterated that reducing energy prices for the underprivileged is one of the government's top priorities,

and efforts are underway in this regard. He said that the government is working on minimizing the environmental impact of energy consumption and is focused on increasing local energy production. He pointed out that without affordable energy, the public would struggle to access it. "We are utilizing domestic resources for energy," he explained, mentioning that significant progress is being

made in electrification "We need to change our working methods, as Pakistan has immense potential," he added. Highlighting the country's energy potential, he noted that Pakistan possesses untapped shale and tight gas reserves. He revealed that the government is introducing a deregulation policy and aims to open the oil sector under a price cap mechanism. The Minister

further highlighted the need to instill confidence in the youth, encouraging them to believe that they are capable of achieving anything. He added that the country will only develop when there is a sense of self-reliance. "We must focus on progress rather than conflicts," he emphasized, reaffirming that ensuring energy access for all remains a key priority for the government.

## Ministry to host National Shabina Mehfil

ISLAMABAD: The Dawah Wing of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony is making preparations to host the National Shabina Mehfil at Faisal Mosque in the federal capital, from the 21st to the 27th of Ramadan. According to the ministry's spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt, selected Huffaz (memorizers of the Quran) from across the country will have the honor of reciting the Holy Quran during the event. "Out of 56 nominated Huffaz from all four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Islamabad, 14 have been finalized for participation," he added. Umar said the final selection includes four Huffaz from Punjab, two each from Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Islamabad, while one each has been chosen from Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He said a panel of renowned Huffaz and Qaris supervised the selection process. He said local Huffaz were assessed in person at the ministry, while others were evaluated through a live online audition. Umar said the National Shabina Mehfil is an annual event that brings together distinguished reciters to offer a spiritually enriching experience during the last ten nights of Ramadan.—APP

## Exhibition showcases exquisite artworks

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of the Director General (DG) of the National Language Promotion Department (NLPD), Professor Dr Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, renowned calligrapher and artist Nasir Seemab has visited the calligraphy exhibition at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA). The exhibition showcased exquisite artworks by calligraphers who were trained in the NLPD's calligraphy classes, said a press release on Monday. These classes are part of NLPD's continuous efforts to preserve and promote the rich tradition of calligraphy, an art form deeply rooted in Islamic history. During his visit, Nasir Seemab, who has earned international recognition for his artistic mastery, engaged with the participants, particularly encouraging the children.—APP

## Pakistan, Bahrain reiterate commitment to expand trade

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Bahrain on Tuesday reiterated their commitment to expanding bilateral trade and economic collaboration during a meeting of the Pakistan-Bahrain Parliamentary Friendship Group (PFG) in Islamabad. The Bahraini delegation, led by Second Deputy Speaker Ahmed Abdul Waheed Qarata, stressed the importance of translating longstanding diplomatic and defense ties into stronger commercial partnerships. Discussions focused on diversifying cooperation across agriculture, textiles, IT, and infrastructure, with both sides agreeing to prioritize parliamentary exchanges to accelerate progress. Federal Pa The PFG encouraged investors from Bahrain to capitalize on opportunities in Pakistan's agriculture, tourism, and IT industries. Bahrain also reaffirmed its support for Pakistan's bid for a 2025-2026 UN Security Council seat. Both sides termed the talks a milestone in their relationship, pledging to harness parliamentary diplomacy and private-sector engagement for mutual prosperity.—DNA

## Pollen allergy issue in Islamabad reviewed

ISLAMABAD: A comprehensive review meeting was held here on Monday to make joint efforts to combat pollen allergy in the federal capital. The meeting chaired by Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health, Dr Mukhtar Bharath focused on the strategies to effectively tackle the increasing problem of pollen allergy in Islamabad. During the session, representatives from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) provided insights into the ongoing measures regarding the removal of wild mulberry trees, which have been identified as a primary contributor to pollen allergies. Dr. Mukhtar said

that under the directives of the Prime Minister, the government is committed to implementing effective measures to control pollen allergies in Islamabad. He pointed out that environmental experts consider wild mulberry trees as the leading cause of allergic reactions due to pollen release. To address this, a comprehensive strategy has been developed, which is now in the execution phase, he added. He highlighted that the process of cutting down over 5,000 out of 7,000 trees at F-9 Park has been completed. "The phased removal of wild mulberry trees is ongoing as part of our commitment to eliminate pollen allergies

from the region. Simultaneously, we are planting new environmentally friendly trees to promote a healthier ecosystem," Dr. Mukhtar explained. Dr. Mukhtar emphasized that the action plan for cutting down trees in the H-8 and H-9 sectors near the Shakarparian area of the Margalla Hills has also been executed. He said that by April, the remaining trees will be removed, and the planting of environmentally friendly replacements will commence. He said the government has demonstrated a solid commitment to controlling pollen allergies and improving the overall air quality for the residents of Islamabad.—DNA

## Large-scale spring tree plantation drive in capital

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) is gearing up for a massive Spring Tree Plantation Drive 2025, aimed at enhancing the green cover of the federal capital. The initiative was discussed in a high-level meeting chaired by CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa at the CDA headquarters on Monday. The meeting was attended by Member Environment, DG Environment, and other senior officials, alongside representatives from the corporate sector, including Nestle, Centaurus Mall, Garana, Imarat Group of Companies, and Agency 21. Representatives from various NGOs and other organizations also participated in the discussions. During the briefing, Chairman Randhawa was informed that the Spring Plantation Drive 2025 will

officially commence on February 19 at IMCB F-8. The campaign will focus on large-scale tree plantation in key areas such as F-9 Park, Shakarparian, along nullahs, and in both urban and rural regions of Islamabad. In a unique approach, the campaign will utilize helicopters and drones to drop seed balls in the hard-to-reach areas. Chairman Randhawa emphasized the importance of involving civil society, private organizations, and the corporate sector in the drive. He directed that specific areas be allocated to companies and brands for tree plantation, urging them to contribute to environmental welfare. To ensure widespread participation, the Chairman also called for the inclusion of students from educational

institutions and the general public in the campaign. He instructed that stalls be set up in major parks and commercial areas across Islamabad to distribute plants and raise awareness about the initiative. In a move to modernize the campaign, Chairman Randhawa directed the introduction of a digitized monitoring system to track the growth and survival of the planted trees. An online plant tracking system will also be established to ensure transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the CDA website will feature a list of indigenous plants suitable for the local climate, with a focus on fruit-bearing and flowering trees. Chairman Randhawa stressed the importance of collective efforts to make the Spring Plantation Drive 2025 a success, urging all stakeholders to play their part in creating a greener and more sustainable Islamabad.—APP

## Fire disrupts power supply in several areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A fire in the main hole linked to the 132 KV Cantt grid station caused power outages across multiple areas. The incident affected power supply on 14 feeders, with 10 feeders restored so far. Areas including Committee Chowk, Liaqat Bagh, Arya Mohalla and Mohanpura are still facing outages, said an IESCO spokesperson in a statement issued here. IESCO operation teams are working to restore power as soon as possible. The IESCO regretted the valued consumer for the inconvenience.

## IHC stops illegal commercial constructions in Children Park E-11

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday ordered the authorities to stop illegal commercial constructions in sector E-11 Children's Park and restore it to its original condition. The IHC's single member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Asif heard a petition against illegal constructions in E-11 Children's Park. The petition was moved by the residents of E-11 against encroachment and illegal constructions. Advocate Kashif Ali Malik appeared in the court on behalf of the petitioners and argued that a green area or public park cannot be converted into a commercial area. He further said that armed men entered the park with heavy machinery and uprooted children's swings, causing severe distress to the residents of E-11 and affecting their fundamental rights. The lawyer informed the court that a senior judge of the Lahore High Court is also among the victims. He added that despite bringing the matter to the notice of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), the authority failed to remove the illegal constructions and encroachments. Kashif Ali Malik Advocate also said that a law and order situation has been created in the area due to the illegal constructions by occupants being stopped.



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## Briefs

## China, Pakistan strengthen renewable energy ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A strategic cooperation agreement to enhance clean energy collaboration was signed between Mingyang Smart Energy Group Co., Ltd., China and the Energy Department of Sindh, Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Under the agreement, Mingyang Smart Energy will construct a 350MW wind-solar integrated power storage project and a 75MW wind power project in Sindh. These projects are expected to be completed and operational within three years. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Zhang Qiyang, President of Global Business Line and CTO of Mingyang Smart Energy, and officials from the Energy Department of Sindh were the signatories. According to the Chinese company, the partnership builds on the long-standing energy collaboration between China and Pakistan. Notably, in 2017, the two nations launched their first Chinese-funded wind power project in Sindh, which included 33 wind turbines from Mingyang Smart Energy. This project, which was successfully connected to the grid, served as a landmark for China-Pakistan clean energy cooperation.

It not only provided local employment opportunities but also spurred the development of related industries, particularly in the supply chain for wind power components. This new agreement underscores the ongoing commitment between China and Pakistan to advance clean energy solutions, contributing to both countries' green development goals.—APP

## Pak's earns \$1.864b from IT services' export

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$1.864 billion by exporting different Information Technology (IT) services in various countries during the first six months of the current fiscal year 2024-25. This shows a growth of 28.04 percent as compared with the US \$ 1.455 billion earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2023-24, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the computer services grew by 34.54 percent as it surged from US \$1.175 billion last year to US \$1.581 billion during July-December 2024-25. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 35.73 percent, from US \$405.160 million to US \$549.912 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services however witnessed a decline of 7.84 percent, from US \$3.129 million to US \$2.884 million. The export and imports of computer software services also decreased by 5.18 percent, from \$311.331 million to \$295.203 million whereas the exports of other computer services witnessed a growth of 61.04 percent from US \$454.812 million to US \$732.430 million. Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review also increased by 746.93 percent growing from US \$1.755 million to US \$14.871 million.—APP



RAWALPINDI: Former Provincial Minister Health and Population Welfare Punjab Dr. Jamal Nasir along with President Anjuman Faiz ul Islam Professor Riaz Ahmed, Col.(R) Jameel, Col. (R) Pervaiz inaugurated the newly constructed Block 2 in Anjuman Faiz ul Islam.

## Govt has prioritized expansion of motorway network

The recent toll hikes were implemented gradually, rather than imposing a 100% increase at once," he said. "We have limited the toll increase to 33% to minimize the burden on the public, and this will be the last adjustment for the foreseeable future

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Communication Gul Asghar Khan Tuesday informed that the government's top priority was to enhance the motorway network, including the reconstruction of M-6, which would now extend directly to Karachi. In response to a calling attention notice regarding the collection of extra toll taxes at various locations on the Karachi-Hyderabad M-9 motorway, he clarified that despite rising costs, the government had not increased toll rates in the past six years. "The recent toll hikes were implemented gradually, rather than imposing a

100% increase at once," he said. "We have limited the toll increase to 33% to minimize the burden on the public, and this will be the last adjustment for the foreseeable future." He acknowledged that the M-9 motorway was built through densely populated areas, leading to multiple entry points and incomplete fencing. He said that the project is being pursued through multiple financing models, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), Pakistan Highway Development (PHD) initiatives, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He further detailed that the project had been divided into six packages of 50 kilometers each, with two packages set to be uploaded for bidding soon.

"Once completed, the M-6 will replace the existing M-9, featuring a new alignment that bypasses urban areas, ensuring a smoother and more efficient route, similar to Punjab's motorways," Khan explained. The initiative aims to improve connectivity, enhance road safety, and facilitate smoother transportation for commuters and businesses across the country. The government has outlined a comprehensive plan to revamp the motorway infrastructure in Sindh, emphasizing the project's strategic importance for national connectivity. He highlighted the progress made since he assumed office a year ago. "Unlike previous governments, we have acted swiftly. Under the leader-

ship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, we decided from day one that we needed to replace the old alignment of the M-6," he added. Despite delays caused by financial closures, he said the government had successfully prepared the necessary feasibility studies and finalized the new alignment for the M-9. Addressing concerns about funding, he noted that financial closure had been achieved by December 2023, although inflation and currency fluctuations had slowed progress. "The motorway is not just for Sindh; it's for all of Pakistan. Our ministry has worked harder on this project in the past year than any government in the past 70 years," he added. He said that the new

alignment would ensure better safety and efficiency, addressing long-standing issues related to population density and inadequate fencing. The project is now part of a multi-pronged approach involving Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and initiatives under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). "The new motorway will significantly improve connectivity, reduce travel time, and ensure the safety of commuters, while boosting economic activities across the region," he said. "We are confident that in the coming months, the public will witness the results of our efforts, and the project will transform the transportation landscape of Sindh and beyond," he added.

## World Bank's \$40b investment in Pak welcomed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of the All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Tuesday that the business community welcomes the ten-year package of \$40 billion investment in Pakistan under the World Bank. The World Bank's decision is an acknowledgment of the improvement in Pakistan's political and economic situation for which the prime minister, army chief, and their team have worked hard, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that our institutional and economic reform program is progressing rapidly. The country's economy is moving in the right direction toward development, which

is increasing the confidence of domestic and foreign investors and international institutions. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the World Bank's decision to invest \$40 billion in Pakistan over 10 years under the Country Partnership Framework is laudable. The prime minister and his team deserve credit for this. Mian Zahid Hussain said that out of \$40 billion, \$20 billion will be spent on the social sector, which will improve many sectors, including health and education. In addition, the International Finance Corporation will invest \$20 billion in the private sector, which will increase the pace of economic growth and improve employment, income, and productivity. The business leader said that the development will yield excellent results and added that the World Bank has always helped Pakistan, but for the past few years, its commitment has waned due to the government of unserious people in the country.

## Kite flying banned in Islamabad, parents warned

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad district administration on Tuesday launched a comprehensive campaign to prohibit kite flying, citing safety concerns and potential public hazards. According to DC Office, to ensure compliance, announcements have been made in mosques across the city, urging citizens to refrain from the activity. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Memon, emphasized the dangers associated with kite flying, describing it as a "deadly sport" that has led to numerous accidents and injuries.—APP

## Chinese community donates Rs.600,000 to rebuild flood-affected school

ISLAMABAD: In a heartwarming gesture of solidarity and friendship, the Panda Chamber of Commerce, a Chinese community organization, and the Lahore Chinese School have jointly donated PKR 600,000 to rebuild the facilities at Chah Darkhan Primary School in Dera Ghazi Khan district of Punjab on February 15th. The donation will fund the construction of two new classrooms and a washroom, with additional support for lighting equipment and school uniforms to follow. The donation comes as a lifeline for the school, which has been struggling since the devastating floods of 2022. The natural disaster left the school in ruins, forcing its 130 students to study in the open air in harsh conditions. Chinese community representatives and local officials attend the donation ceremony at Chah Darkhan Primary School in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, photo provided by the Panda Chamber of Commerce. "After the floods, our students had no proper place to learn. This donation will not only provide them with classrooms but also restore their dignity and hope for a better future," said Javed, the school's principal, according to Gwadar Pro on Tuesday. The donation ceremony was attended by Cao Ke, Deputy Consul General of the Chinese Consulate in Lahore. "We encourage more Chinese companies and overseas Chinese to follow this example, working together to help children return to school and achieve educational development, which is key to poverty alleviation and economic growth." As part of its ongoing efforts, the Consulate has pledged to take further measures to support out-of-school children in the region, including initiatives to promote education as a tool for poverty reduction and sustainable development.—DNA

## Fire disrupts power supply in several areas

ISLAMABAD: A fire in the main hole linked to the 132 KV Cantt grid station caused power outages across multiple areas. The incident affected power supply on 14 feeders, with 10 feeders restored so far. Areas including Committee Chowk, Liaqat Bagh, Arya Mohalla and Mohanpura are still facing outages, said an IESCO spokesperson in a statement issued here. IESCO operation teams are working to restore power as soon as possible. The IESCO regretted the valued consumer for the inconvenience.—APP

## Police arrest 3bike lifters with two stolen motorcycles

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested three bike lifters, dacoits and street criminals and recovered two stolen motorcycles, cash Rs 14,500, weapons and other items from their possession, said a Police spokesman. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Bani Police Station managed to net three bike lifters, dacoits and street criminals namely Adil, Arbaz Khan and Waqas and recovered two stolen motorcycles, Rs 14,500 cash, weapons and other items from their possession. The arrested accused are record holders in dacoity and street crime cases. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Muhammad Haseeb Raja said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.—APP

## ADB CUP expands operations by 50pc over next decade

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a plan to scale up its operations by 50 percent over the next decade, leveraging its existing capital base to enhance its development impact across Asia and the Pacific. The Capital Utilization Plan (CUP) outlines a pathway for increasing ADB's annual financing commitments from \$24 billion in 2024 to exceed \$36 billion by 2034. This expanded financing will bolster ADB's developing member countries' (DMCs) efforts to address critical development priorities in the region, according to ADB press release received here Tuesday. "This dynamic plan responds to the changing needs of our region and strengthens the transformative impact of ADB's work, improving the lives of people and safeguarding our planet," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. "By utilizing our enhanced lending capacity, the CUP enables us to make strategic investments to address complex challenges while raising the quality and effectiveness of our operations across the region," he added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PMYP, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan receiving the honorary shield from the vice chancellor of GC Women University on the occasion of the Future Youth Leaders Conference.

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## Violations of Palestinian culture

WHILE Israel has been accused of war crimes and alleged genocidal intentions in Gaza, as well as enacting a harsh and repressive military policy against Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank, East Jerusalem has become a focal point for ongoing Israeli cultural violations affecting Palestinians. These actions in the hoped-for capital of Palestine have sparked international concern, as they threaten the preservation of Palestinian identity and heritage in the area. Jerusalem, the cradle of the three Abrahamic religions, has long been a cultural and religious hub for Palestinians. It is home to highly respected cultural institutions, artists and scholars. While Israel, which annexed East Jerusalem following its occupation in 1967, initially gave its residents a wide range of cultural space, the Oslo process that began in 1993 caused a major Israeli reversal. In addition to the huge concrete wall Israel erected around the city, barring the rest of the West Bankers open access to the city, it has also cracked down on various symbols of cultural expression. Using the false claim of connectivity to the Palestinian national center in Ramallah, Israeli policies have increasingly restricted Palestinian cultural activities, often under the guise of security concerns. Palestinian cultural events have routinely faced disruption. The Israeli authorities have imposed restrictions on festivals, performances and artistic gatherings, severely limiting the ability of Palestinians to celebrate and preserve their cultural identity. Palestinian cultural institutions in East Jerusalem have experienced frequent raids and closures. In June 2013, Israel ordered the cancellation of a children's puppet festival at a Palestinian theater in East Jerusalem, claiming the eight-day event had been unlawfully sponsored by the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian National Theatre, also known as El-Hakawati Theatre, had been running an annual festival for children continuously for 18 years. It was previously barred by a military order based on the 1945 British Emergency Regulations. Similar orders have been issued to stop what Israel considers national events, or if Tel Aviv believes that the Ramallah-based Palestinian government is involved in either funding, sponsoring or giving its blessing to such events. Using draconian decades-old laws inherited from the time of the British mandate, Israel has ordered the stoppage of events such as art exhibitions, music festivals and even the screening of a film about drug abuse in Jerusalem and an event to celebrate high school students' accomplishments. More recently, this month's raid on the Educational Bookshop and its owners' arrest illustrate the ongoing Israeli attempts to suppress intellectual freedom by confiscating literature deemed provocative. As Nathan Thrall, a Pulitzer Prize-winning American author, commented regarding the bookstore incident: "To have a country ban books with the word Palestine in them is an outrage." Palestinian Minister of Culture Emad Hamdan emphasized the impact of the bookstore raid. "This attack is part of a systematic policy aimed at destroying the Palestinian cultural and educational structure in Jerusalem. These actions not only hinder cultural expression but also aim to fragment Palestinian society within Jerusalem," he said.



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## New narrative for a multipolar world

THE 61st Munich Security Conference (MSC) was held in Germany from Friday to Sunday, and the presence of the Chinese delegation brought a warm breeze to Europe. Some European media outlets noted that, compared to politicians from some major powers, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi "used a more accommodating and reconciliatory tone to address Europeans," assuring them that China is a trustworthy partner. Hong Kong's South China Morning Post also reported that China "went on charm offensive," demonstrating a friendly and cooperative posture and a constructive attitude. This year is the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union (EU), and Wang clearly conveyed China's "worldview" to Europe and the world through his speech at the MSC and his meetings with dignitaries, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas: China will surely be a factor of certainty in this multipolar system, and strive to be a steadfast constructive force in a changing world. At the same time, China has always seen in Europe an important pole in the multipolar world. It has always believed that the two sides are partners, not rivals and that the trend of multipolarity has given China and Europe more possibilities to work together to seek the "common denominator." The theme of this year's MSC report also focuses on "multipolarization," pointing out that this trend may become an opportunity for global governance, or it may lead to the risk of disorder due to increased polarization, implying Europe's confusion about its own role in the context of multipolarity. At present, the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues to deplete Europe's strategic resources, the US' unilateralist policies continue to impact transatlantic trust, while emerging technological competition, economic friction and the energy crisis have, to varying degrees, exacerbated Europe's strategic anxieties. The EU itself is a union of sovereign states inherently possessing a multilateralism gene. It understands that protectionism, technological blockades and "small yard, high fence" will only exacerbate global risks. Issues such as the digital divide, climate crisis and governance deficits require equal cooperation among multiple parties for resolution. China and Europe's interests and goals are highly aligned in these areas. On the Ukraine crisis, which is a major concern for Europeans, Wang said that from the day after the crisis broke out, China has called for resolution through dialogue and consultation. Such a sentiment is shared by Europeans who long for peace. China has always advocated that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected and emphasized that disputes should be resolved through dialogue and consultation. The China-proposed Global Security Initiative, which emphasizes common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security concepts, offers new ideas for easing tensions in Europe. Regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China has not stood by idly, nor has it sought to profit from the situation. Instead, it has consistently advocated for all parties to exercise restraint and has opposed the instrumentalization of the conflict. These efforts are evident to all. China is firmly committed to being a constructive force for peace in Europe, which holds great significance for the continent.

## Saudi Arabia's rise as a global diplomacy broker

Osama Al-Sharif

When President Trump suggested that the US would "own" Gaza and displace its inhabitants, ostensibly on humanitarian grounds, his suggestion sent shock waves across the globe, but particularly through the region. His proposal rattled Jordan and Egypt, the two countries that Trump called on to receive the Palestinians displaced from Gaza. But more importantly, it signaled a dangerous departure from the decades-old policy that was anchored in international law. Such a proposal, if executed, would further destabilize the region and bring down the foundations of the current global order. So, when Jordan's King Abdullah met with Trump at the White House last week, his response to Trump's idea was that Arab leaders...

SAUDI Arabia is solidifying its position as a global and regional diplomatic hub. On Friday, Riyadh will host the leaders of the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in addition to Jordan and Egypt, to discuss an Arab plan for the reconstruction of Gaza without displacing its 2.2 million inhabitants. Once approved, the plan will be presented at the meeting of Arab leaders in Cairo at the end of the month. It will become a counterproposal to President Donald Trump's plan to displace the people of Gaza while taking over the beleaguered enclave and turning it into a regional riviera. And on Tuesday, in the Saudi capital, senior US and Russian officials kicked off preparatory meetings aimed at setting the parameters for a plan to end the war in Ukraine ahead of a proposed summit between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Saudi Arabia. The choice of the Kingdom as a diplomatic hub for conflict resolution initiatives indicates the country's growing influence regionally and globally as it implements a foreign policy that seeks to keep its doors open in all directions. When President Trump suggested that the US would "own" Gaza and displace its inhabitants, ostensibly on humanitarian grounds, his suggestion sent shock waves across the globe, but particularly through the region. His proposal rattled Jordan and Egypt, the two countries that Trump called on to receive the Palestinians displaced from Gaza. But more importantly, it signaled a dangerous departure from the decades-old policy that was anchored in international law. Such a proposal, if executed, would further destabilize the region and bring down the foundations of the current global order. So, when Jordan's King Abdullah met with Trump at the White House last week, his response to Trump's idea was that Arab leaders had been invited by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose country has rejected any attempt to displace the Palestinians from their land, to work on an Arab plan for the reconstruction of Gaza without the displacement of its people. The choice of the venue is essential. Trump un-

derstands the importance of Saudi Arabia politically and economically. It was the first country he visited at the outset of his first term. Early in his second term, the president spoke of the Kingdom's importance, especially as an economic powerhouse valuable to the US economy. The Arab plan for Gaza to be agreed to in Riyadh will receive recognition and support not only in the Arab and Muslim worlds but also beyond. Already, many European, African, Asian and Latin American leaders have decry any attempt to displace the Palestinians, while supporting efforts to rebuild the enclave. Egypt has been working on the details of the proposed plan, which calls for an independent body of technocrats to administer the Palestinian enclave without the participation of Hamas or any other faction. A plan to rebuild the Strip will be implemented through the World Bank and other regional and international bodies without the displacement of the inhabitants. Once such a plan is approved, a senior Arab delegation will present it to Trump. All indications point to a positive reception by the Americans, who will ensure that all parties, including Israel, abide by it. In terms of the Ukraine war, the Saudis have followed a wise foreign policy since the beginning of the conflict, adhering to the principles of international law without alienating any of the parties involved. In May 2023, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was invited to address the Arab League Summit in Jeddah. And while Ukraine will not be a party to the US-Russian preparatory talks in Riyadh, Zelensky will visit Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, one day after a meeting there between top Russian and US officials. Likewise, Putin visited Saudi Arabia in December 2023, a rare foreign trip by the Russian leader since the war with Ukraine broke out in February 2022. He met with the Saudi crown prince, who he had last seen in 2019. Riyadh's balanced approach to the Russia-Ukraine crisis has presented it as an ac-

ceptable venue for the US-Russia talks and the planned Putin-Trump summit. Saudi Arabia has played a key role in mediation and in resolving its own conflicts with other nations. In March 2023, Riyadh embraced a Chinese initiative to normalize ties with Iran, which has succeeded in strengthening relations between the two regional powers. The Saudis have been active in attempts to end the war in Sudan, bring peace to Yemen and rebuild war-torn Syria, while supporting the election of a new president in Lebanon and helping to bring peace and stability to Iraq, among other things. Addressing the core of the region's instability, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Kingdom presented the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 and this remains the benchmark for a just and lasting peace in the region based on the two-state solution. Riyadh's past successes, such as brokering the Taif Agreement in 1989 to end the civil war in Lebanon, and its current strategic positioning suggest a potential for significant influence in shaping the new global landscape. This carefully orchestrated approach has enabled Saudi Arabia to create political and commercial alliances with countries like China, India and Russia and blocs like BRICS, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and others. This diplomatic dynamism did not come at the expense of the Kingdom's decades-old alliances and partnerships with countries like the US and blocs like the EU. Saudi Arabia has also worked to mend relations within the Gulf region, particularly after the 2017 diplomatic crisis with Qatar. Efforts at reconciliation have included high-level meetings and discussions aimed at restoring cooperation among GCC member states. As part of its Vision 2030 reform plan, Saudi Arabia is using its diplomatic reach to improve its international leverage. This includes efforts toward conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives. Today, it has become the locomotive that pulls other countries in the region toward a more stable and prosperous future.

## Federalism: A quest of national integration in Pakistan

Maimoona Rasool

The book offers a detailed historical analysis of federalism in Pakistan, tracing its development from the early years following independence to the present day. Dr. Zaheer examines key constitutional milestones, including the 1956, 1962 and 1973 constitutions and their impact on federalism. He critiques the 1956 and 1962 constitutions for their centralizing tendencies, which he argues contributed to regional alienation and political instability. The discussion of the 1973 Constitution is particularly insightful. While this constitution laid the groundwork for a federal structure...

THE book Federalism and the Quest for National Integration in Pakistan is another significant contribution by Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer, addressing the complex issues of federalism and national integration in Pakistan. The book explores into the theoretical underpinnings of federalism, its historical trajectory and its role in fostering national unity. With a particular focus on constitutional reforms, especially the 18th Amendment, the author, Dr. Zaheer, explores the intricate relationship between federal structures and regional identities. This work serves as an essential resource for scholars, policymakers and students of political science seeking to understand the complexities of federalism in Pakistan. One of the book's standout features is its robust theoretical framework. Dr. Zaheer begins by tracing the historical and philosophical roots of federalism, defining it as a system of governance that balances power between a central authority and regional entities. In its ideal form, federalism promotes cooperation and national cohesion while safeguarding regional autonomy. However, in Pakistan, centralization, political instability and ethnic divisions have often weakened federalism. The author provides a balanced discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of federalism, connecting these theoretical aspects to Pakistan's unique context. Dr. Zaheer argues that federalism in Pakistan has largely remained a theoretical concept rather than a fully operational political system. While constitutional frameworks have enshrined federal principles, their implementation has been inconsistent. This inconsistency has fueled tensions between the central government and the provinces, particularly in regions like Balochistan and Sindh, where demands for greater autonomy have often been met with resistance from the federal authority. The book offers a detailed historical analysis of federalism in Pakistan, tracing its development from the early years following independence to the present day. Dr. Zaheer examines key constitutional milestones, including the 1956, 1962 and 1973 constitutions and their impact on federalism. He critiques the 1956 and 1962 constitutions for their centralizing tendencies, which he argues contributed to regional alienation and political instability. The discussion of the 1973 Constitution is particularly insightful. While this constitution laid the groundwork for a federal structure, successive governments failed to fully implement its provisions, resulting in a persistent imbalance between the center and the provinces. The book also critically assesses the role of military regimes, particularly those of General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and General Per-

vez Musharraf, in shaping Pakistan's federal landscape. Dr. Zaheer contends that the military's preference for centralized governance has often undermined provincial autonomy and democratic governance. A significant portion of the book is devoted to case studies of Pakistan's four provinces Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. These case studies provide a detailed exploration of regional grievances, historical injustices and the ongoing struggle for greater autonomy. • Punjab: Dr. Zaheer highlights Punjab's dominant role in Pakistan's political and economic landscape, arguing that its disproportionate influence has fueled resentment among smaller provinces. While Punjab serves as the economic and political hub of the country, its perceived preferential treatment in resource allocation and governance decisions has exacerbated tensions with other regions. • Sindh: The book delves into the ethnic and political complexities of Sindh, particularly the divide between the urban Muhajir population and the rural Sindhi populace. Dr. Zaheer examines the rise of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and its demands for greater representation, as well as broader issues such as economic grievances and water distribution conflicts. • Pakhtunkhwa: The analysis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa focuses on its historical struggle for provincial rights and its role in Pakistan's broader security dynamics. The book discusses the impact of the war on terror on the region and how federal policies have influenced local governance. • Balochistan: Perhaps the most compelling section of the book is its discussion of Balochistan, which has long been a flashpoint for conflict between federal authorities and regional nationalist movements. Dr. Zaheer examines the historical roots of Balochistan's grievances, including economic marginalization, resource exploitation and human rights violations. The book underscores the need for meaningful dialogue and political accommodation to address the province's concerns and foster national integration. A central focus of the book is the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, which Dr. Zaheer describes as a landmark in the country's federal evolution. Enacted in 2010, the amendment aimed to decentralize power and grant greater autonomy to provinces. Dr. Zaheer provides a critical analysis of the amendment's impact, noting both its successes and limitations. While the amendment represented a significant step toward strengthening federalism, challenges remain in its implementation, particularly regarding fiscal federalism and administrative capacity at the provincial level. Dr. Zaheer convincingly argues that a functional federal

system is essential for national integration in Pakistan. The book highlights how the failure to address provincial grievances has led to political instability, ethnic conflicts and, in some cases, separatist movements. The author calls for a more inclusive and participatory federal model that recognizes Pakistan's ethnic and regional diversity while maintaining national unity. The book also explores the role of political institutions, the judiciary and political parties in shaping federalism. Dr. Zaheer analyzes the politicization of federal institutions and the judiciary's inconsistent role in resolving federal disputes. He emphasizes the need for democratic consolidation and institutional reforms to strengthen federalism and promote national cohesion. In the concluding chapters, Dr. Zaheer offers several recommendations for strengthening federalism in Pakistan. These include: • Genuine devolution of power to provinces beyond constitutional provisions. • Strengthening fiscal federalism to ensure equitable resource distribution. • Enhancing inter-provincial coordination and cooperation. • Addressing regional grievances through inclusive governance and economic policies. • Implementing institutional reforms to depoliticize federal institutions and ensure their effective functioning. The book concludes with a call for a more pragmatic and adaptive approach to federalism, one that balances regional aspirations with national unity. Dr. Zaheer's analysis is both comprehensive and thought-provoking, making the book an essential read for anyone interested in Pakistan's federalism and governance challenges. Federalism and the Quest for National Integration in Pakistan is an exactly researched and well-structured work that makes a significant contribution to the study of federalism in Pakistan. Dr. Zaheer's work is commendable for its depth, clarity and balanced analysis. While the book is highly academic in nature, its accessible language and structured arguments make it suitable for both scholars and general readers interested in Pakistan's political scene. The whole, the book presents a compelling case for strengthening federalism as a means to achieve national integration. By addressing historical grievances, promoting equitable governance and promotion regional inclusivity, Pakistan can move toward a more stable and cohesive federal system. Dr. Zaheer's insights and recommendations offer a valuable roadmap for policymakers seeking to sail across the complexities of federalism in Pakistan. - The writer is Assistant professor, National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences, Islamabad

## Briefs

Govt committed to achieve \$5 bn trade target with Turkiye

From Page 01

The prime minister said peace in the country was linked with the economic prosperity which would move the wheel of progress rapidly. For economic stability, conducive environment was a requisite, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the complete elimination of terrorism is the mission of his government, as Pakistan's development and prosperity are linked to it.

Speaking at a meeting of the Federal Cabinet in Islamabad today, he commended the sacrifices being rendered by the armed forces of Pakistan in the fight against terrorism. He said their sacrifices will always be remembered.

Talking about the economic situation in the country, the Prime Minister quoted his discussion with a delegation of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, who commended Pakistan's macroeconomic stability and positive economic indicators as a result of the reform agenda of the government.

Pakistan and China reaffirm 'ironclad' friendship

From Page 01

Pakistan's integrity, sovereignty and core issues including Jammu and Kashmir dispute, the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's firm resolve to further elevate bilateral relations with China to a higher level of cooperation and collaboration.

In his remarks, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China accorded a special significance to Pakistan in its foreign policy, including its role as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. China would continue to firmly support Pakistan on its core issues and socio-economic development.

Russia, US agree to work toward ending Ukraine war

From Page 01

He stressed, however, that the talks – which were hosted by Saudi Arabia and also attended by his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov – marked the beginning of a conversation, and more work needs to be done down the road.

No Ukrainian officials were present at the meeting, which came as the beleaguered country is slowly but steadily losing ground against more numerous Russian troops in a grinding war that began nearly three years ago.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country wouldn't accept any outcome from this week's talks if Kyiv doesn't take part. European allies have also expressed concerns they are being sidelined.

Imran adamant 'won't cut any deal' come what may

From Page 01

During her interaction with journalists outside the Central Jail Adiala, Khan's sister said: "Jail rules and court orders have no value here."

Aleema said that her car was stopped two kilometres from the jail premises, adding that Khan's lawyers were also stopped. She said that they were allowed to meet the PTI founder after waiting for 50 minutes.

Responding to a question about his health, she said that the PTI founder was fit and healthy. "There is no truth in the reports [doing the rounds in the media] claiming that the PTI founder is ill," she added.

Pakistan can bridge gap between China and US: Bilawal

From Page 01

stating that peace with the rival country, or at the very least trade, was possible. Speaking about US President Donald Trump, Bilawal described him as a "deal-maker" and suggested that Pakistan could successfully engage with him.

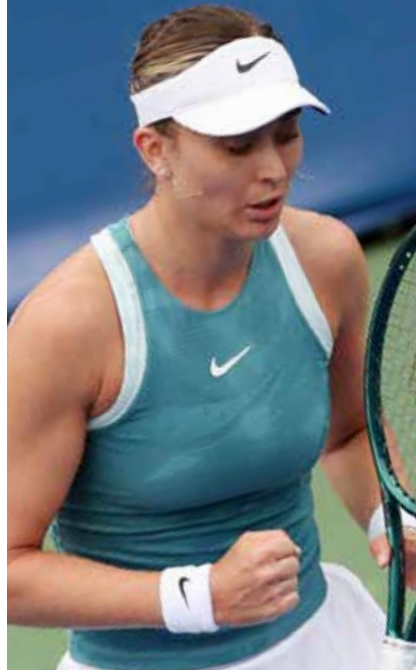
# Rybakina, Badosa set for blockbuster clash at Dubai

*Head-to-Head: Their previous meetings have produced high-quality battles, and both are known for their powerful baseline game*

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: The 2025 Dubai Championships are heating up, and tennis fans are in for a thrilling third-round showdown as Elena Rybakina and Paula Badosa collide after dominant second-round performances. Both players cruised through their matches, setting up an anticipated battle between two of the WTA's most exciting competitors. For Elena Rybakina, her Dubai debut was a statement performance. The sixth seed enjoyed a first-round bye, meaning she entered the tournament fresh in the second round. Originally expected to face Jelena Ostapenko, the Kazakhstani instead took on Moyuka Uchijima, after the Latvian's shocking first-round exit.

Despite never playing Uchijima before, Rybakina wasted no time establishing control. She broke serve early, dictating the baseline rallies and never facing a break point in the opening set. With relentless shot-making and precision, she wrapped up the first set 6-3. The 2022 Wimbledon champion continued her aggressive dominance in the second set, securing two early breaks to race ahead 4-0. Uchijima had a brief window to fight back with two break points in the following game, but Rybakina held firm. She sealed the match 6-3, 6-2 with a commanding performance that left no doubt about her title aspirations. Key Stat: Rybakina did not face a single break



point until the final moments of the match. With questions swirling around her coaching situation following Stefano Vukov's suspension, Rybakina will be eager to let her tennis do the talking in Dubai. On the other side of the draw, Paula Badosa made an even bigger statement. The ninth seed entered Dubai with momentum, easily dis-



patching Lulu Sun 6-3, 6-4 in the opening round. Her second-round opponent, Elise Mertens, was expected to be a much tougher challenge. The Belgian had been on a seven-match winning streak before a third-round loss at the Qatar Open, making her a dangerous opponent. But Badosa was in no mood for drama. She broke Mertens twice

in the first set, saving the only break point she faced, and stormed to a 6-2 win. If that wasn't dominant enough, Badosa's second-set performance was a masterclass. She won 21 of the first 24 points, leaving Mertens completely overwhelmed. Without facing a single break point, she wrapped up the match 6-2, 6-1. Key Stat: Badosa won 21 of the first 24 points in the second set—one of the most dominant stretches of her career. After struggling with injuries and inconsistency in 2024, Badosa looks locked in and ready to compete for big titles again. With both players in scintillating form, the Rybakina vs. Badosa showdown promises to be one of the highlights of the Dubai Championships. Head-to-Head: Their previous meetings have produced high-quality battles, and both are known for their powerful baseline game. Rybakina's Strength: Her effortless power and serving ability make her a threat on hard courts, especially in fast conditions like Dubai. Badosa's Strength: She thrives on aggressive returning and extended rallies, and her defensive skills could neutralize Rybakina's first-strike tennis. Both players will be fighting for a deep run in one of the biggest WTA 1000 events of the season. However, rain delays have made scheduling uncertain, and organizers are still finalizing the match timing. Regardless of when they step on court, one thing is certain: This is a match no tennis fan will want to miss.

## PTI vows to repeal 26th amend if...

FROM PAGE 01

the government and is striving for the release of all political prisoners. He also highlighted Pakistan's economic challenges, mentioning that people are selling their properties to leave the country, while youth are paying hefty sums to seek opportunities abroad. He accused the government of failing to uphold the rule of law, adding that even the IMF delegation has expressed concerns over judicial matters. Ayub announced that PTI would launch a strong movement after Ramazan and reaffirmed that the 26th constitutional amendment would be scrapped once they regain power. Bail Extension in May 9 Cases Meanwhile, an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Lahore extended Omar Ayub's interim bail in May 9 cases until March 14.

## 30 terrorists killed in South...

FROM PAGE 01

as a result of which, 30 were killed. "Sanitisation operation was being conducted to eliminate any other Khariji found in the area," the ISPR said, adding that security forces were determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country. Last week, four Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom and six terrorists were killed in a North Waziristan operation. The ISPR, in a statement, said the security forces conducted an operation in the general area of Miran Shah, North Waziristan District, and neutralised six terrorists. "However, during intense fire exchange, Lieutenant Muhammad Hassan Arshaf, resident of Lahore leading his troops from the front, fought gallantly and embraced Shahadat along with his three men – Naib Subedar Muhammad Bilal, Sepoy Farhat Ullah and Sepoy Himat Khan."

No global ban on civilians military trials: SC judge

From Page 01

heard the intra-court appeal against the military trials of civilians, during which senior lawyer Salman Akram Raja presented arguments on behalf of the convicted defendant, Arzam Junaid. Last year, the apex court's constitutional bench granted conditional permission to military courts to announce verdicts in cases involving 85 suspects – allegedly involved in the May 9, 2023, riots.

In its order on the hearing of the appeals against civilians' military trial, the constitutional bench had said judgments of military courts would be conditional to the top court verdict on the cases pending before it. Subsequently, the military courts sentenced 85 PTI activists for two to 10 years of "rigorous imprisonment"

## Lockie Ferguson ruled out of Champions Trophy 2025

New Zealand will play the Champions Trophy 2025 curtain raiser against Pakistan tomorrow

DNA

LAHORE: New Zealand fast bowler Lockie Ferguson has been ruled out of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 due to a foot injury sustained during a warm-up match against Afghanistan in Karachi on Sunday. Ferguson felt pain in his right foot after bowling a spell, and an initial medical assessment confirmed he would not be fit for the remainder of the tournament. With the Champions Trophy set to begin tomorrow and its short duration, the decision was made to send Ferguson home for rehabilitation. To fill the gap left by Ferguson, Canterbury Kings fast bowler Kyle Jamieson will join Blackcaps squad and depart for Pakistan this evening. Jamieson made a successful return to domestic cricket in December after recovering from a 10-month rehabilitation for a stress fracture in his back. Playing for Canterbury in the Dream11 Super Smash, he was instrumental in the Kings' Grand Final run, finishing as the joint second-leading wicket-taker with 14 wickets, including impressive figures of 4-12 against the Central Stags at Hagley Oval.

## Army wins fitness challenge Pakistan title

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui and Havaladar Maqbool Ahmad led the Pakistan Army to victory, securing six gold medals and helping the Army claim the top position in the third edition of the Fitness Challenge Pakistan, organized by the Pakistan Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation. The two-day event, held at the Arena Hall, Qayyum Stadium in Peshawar, followed the guidelines of the International Fitness and Bodybuilding Federation (IFBB). Teams from Pakistan Army, Police, Railways, Higher Education Commission (HEC), and provincial teams from Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Islamabad competed in the event. The Army dominated the competition, winning 16 gold and six silver medals. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa finished second with two gold and five silver medals, while the Police secured third place with two gold and one silver medal. Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui, competing in the masters category, clinched three gold medals in the singles, mixed doubles, and team fitness events. Meanwhile, Havaladar Maqbool Ahmad, who also represents Pakistan at international events, won three gold medals in the men's doubles, team fitness, and mixed doubles categories. Tariq Pervez, President of the Pakistan Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation, congratulated all the winning athletes, praising their fitness achievements. He emphasized that

their success is a true testament to the power of physical fitness, which not only builds individual resilience but also contributes to fostering a healthier, stronger nation.



## Spain debates linguistic nuance of Bellingham's foul language

WEB DESK

MADRID: An unlikely debate about translation and cultural interpretations of English profanity has ignited in Spain after Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham was sent off for verbally abusing a referee on Saturday. Monday's mainstream TV shows, radio phone-ins and the front pages of newspapers and major websites wrestled with the concept of Bellingham's novel defence that he did not shout "fuck you" at the official, but merely "fuck off". Advertisement • Scroll to continue Bellingham, 21, was shown a red card in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Osasuna in LaLiga as referee Jose Munuera Montero believed the England forward directed the foul language at him. However, Bellingham and his coach Carlo Ancelotti said the official was mistaken. "I'm an English player... and when I speak on the pitch it's normal that I use expressions that come naturally to me in English," Bellingham told reporters on Saturday. "There was no insult, you can see in the video right away, it was an expression to myself, I'm not even directing myself towards

the referee. But obviously there was a misunderstanding. He's believed I've said it to him. Advertisement • Scroll to continue "I've seen the video and it doesn't match the (referee) report. I hope that the footage will be reviewed and see that it's not the same as the report." Ancelotti, who managed in England with Chelsea and Everton, backed his player's defence. "I think he (the referee) misunderstood Bellingham's English... The translation is not the same and I don't think it's offensive at all," he said. "The red card comes out of the referee's nervousness. Bellingham has done nothing to be sent off. Absolutely nothing." In the Premier League, players routinely use strong language when decisions go against them, and punishments are uncommon. Barcelona manager Hansi Flick took a different view when asked about the incident: "It is a lack of respect in any situation," said the German. The forward could be facing a four to 12-game ban for "insulting, offending, or addressing the main referee, assistants, fourth official, directors, or sports authorities in offensive terms or attitudes". Bellingham added: "What you have to understand is that there is a lot of emotion on the pitch and these details can cost you games.

## Rizwan clears air on Babar batting position

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan on Tuesday, addressed the speculations regarding Babar Azam's batting position for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled to commence on February 19. Babar, who is yet to score a century since his 151-run knock against Nepal in August 2023, is under a lot of scrutiny due to his inability to score big across formats. The right-handed batter was promoted to open the innings alongside returning Fakhar Zaman for the recently concluded tri-nation ODI series and the Champions Trophy 2025 to follow but could not turn the tide in his favour as he only managed meagre scores of 10, 23 and 29 in three innings thus far. His inability to excel in the new role led to criticism by cricket pundits, who termed the move 'unjust'. Meanwhile, Pakistan skipper Rizwan, while addressing the pre-match conference ahead of the national team's campaign opener against New Zealand, revealed that the star batter will continue to bat as an opener in the mega event as he was 'satisfied' with the position. "Babar Azam will open for Pakistan. We need a left-right combination in the middle overs, and Babar is satisfied with the position," said Mohammad Rizwan.

## Students join hands to create awareness about drug abuse



DNA

GUJRAT: Adolescence is a critical developmental period, and substance abuse can have long-lasting impacts on a teenager's mental, physical, and social well-being. Rehabilitation for teenagers struggling with drug addiction requires an empathetic, and structured approach that addresses both their immediate needs and long-term recovery goals. Three students from Beaconhouse School System Gujrat—M. Arham Ali Rathore, Momin Farooq, and Abdullah Habib—formed "Group Sober Choices" with the goal of spreading awareness about drug addiction and suggesting rehabilitation strategies. As part of their initiative, they organized seminars to educate the community on the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of recovery. These seminars served as a platform for sharing information, promoting empathy, and fostering understanding among community members. In addition to public awareness efforts, the group engaged in direct, one-on-one interactions with individuals struggling with addiction. These conversations aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the addicts' behavior, struggles, and motivations. They also explored the dynamics of how these individuals interacted with their families, shedding light on the emotional and social challenges faced by both addicts and their loved ones. Through these discussions, the students gathered valuable insights on the importance of family support in the rehabilitation process and sought to promote healthier, more compassionate relationships within affected families. By addressing both community-level awareness and personal relationships, Group Sober Choices worked toward creating a more informed and supportive environment for those battling addiction. Their holistic approach emphasized empathy, education, and collaboration as key elements of the rehabilitation journey. The group also used social media as an effective tool for reaching a wide audience. Share infographics, videos, and testimonials that highlighted the risks of drug abuse and the benefits of seeking help. They also created interactive campaigns to encourage discussion and engagement.



## Briefs

## Gold dips by Rs 1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,000 and was sold at Rs 304,200 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 303,200 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 857 to Rs 260,802 from Rs 259,945 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs.794 to Rs 239,077 from Rs 238,283. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,350 and Rs.2,872 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$10 to \$2,910 from \$2,900 whereas the prices of silver in international market remained stagnant at \$32.45, the Association reported.—APP

## PSX turns around to bullish trend, gains 1,344 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 1,344.95 points, a positive change of 1.20 per cent, closing at 113,088.48 points as compared to 111,743.53 points on the last trading day.

A total of 545,005,593 shares were traded during the day as compared to 511,194,686 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs20.741 billion against Rs19.635 billion on the last trading day. As many as 446 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 255 of them recorded gains and 139 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 52 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were B.O. Punjab with 200,841,500 shares at Rs.13.23 per share, Power Cement with 25,779,974 shares at Rs.10.71 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 21,844,484 shares at Rs.1.50 per share.—APP

## Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.36 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.26

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.85 and Rs 281.35, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 37 paise to close at Rs292.34 against the last day's closing of Rs292.71, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 72 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs352.46 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs351.74. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 02 paise each to close at Rs 76.05 and Rs 74.48, respectively.—DNA

## Over 200 killed in three-day Sudan paramilitary assault

PORT SUDAN: Sudanese paramilitaries have killed more than 200 people, including women and children, in a three-day assault on villages in the country's south, a lawyer group monitoring the war said Tuesday.

The Emergency Lawyers group, which documents rights abuses, said the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces attacked unarmed civilians in the villages of Al-Kadaris and Al-Khelwat, in White Nile state. The RSF carried out "executions, kidnappings, enforced disappearances and property looting" during the assault since Saturday, which also left hundreds wounded or missing, it said. The lawyer group said some residents were shot at while attempting to flee across the Nile River. Some drowned in the process, with the lawyers calling the attack an act of "genocide.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance, Ali Pervaiz Malik, inaugurated the Carol Power Project during an event entitled Regional Connectivity and Pakistan: Emerging Opportunities.

## Thai envoy seeks KCCI's help to expedite FTA conclusion

The Ambassador also shared his ambition to increase the Thailand-Pakistan trade volume from its current value of US\$1.1 billion to US\$2 billion

DNA

KARACHI: The Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan, Rongvudhi Virabutr, while underscoring the need to conclude the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Thailand and Pakistan, urged the Karachi Chamber to push the government to finalize the FTA as soon as possible which would certainly help in further improving the existing trade ties between the two countries. Expressing the intent to accelerate discussion on FTA at a meeting during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Thai Ambassador said that although negotiations have been suspended for some time, finalizing the FTA was his top priority. "We urge the business community in Karachi, particularly KCCI, to advocate for the timely conclusion of the FTA. While Pakistan has faced challenges with trade deficits in previous

FTAs, it is important to recognize that these agreements extend beyond goods trading and include services and investment—key areas where both nations can benefit", he added. Consul General of Thailand Surashete Boontinand, Senior Vice President Zia ul Arfeen, Vice President Faisal Khalil Ahmed, Chairman Diplomatic Missions & Embassies Liaison Subcommittee Ahsan Arshad Sheikh, Former President Majid Aziz, KCCI Managing Committee Members as well as representatives from the Thai Embassy in Islamabad and Consulate in Karachi were also present on the occasion. The Ambassador also shared his ambition to increase the Thailand-Pakistan trade volume from its current value of US\$1.1 billion to US\$2 billion. He pointed out that trade between the two countries had previously reached US\$1.8 billion before the COVID-19 pandemic, making a target

of US\$2 billion achievable with concerted effort. "We can identify new sectors for cooperation and stimulate activities that will boost bilateral trade", he added. On the topic of bilateral trade, the Ambassador mentioned that Pakistan's exports to Thailand currently stood at around US\$150 million, with trade balance in favor of Thailand. However, he emphasized that there is potential to increase exports to Thailand, particularly in the pharmaceutical, seafood, chemicals, and cement sectors etc. He noted that approximately 60 percent of Pakistan's economy is driven by the services sector, which presents a wealth of opportunities for collaboration. "While manufacturing is a critical aspect of trade, we must also look towards the services sector when seeking to expand our trade relationship." Furthermore, Thai Envoy emphasized Thailand's support for electric

vehicles (EVs), which are becoming increasingly popular in the Thai automotive market. He suggested that Thailand could assist Pakistan in developing its EV industry by sharing expertise and technology. Highlighting Karachi's pivotal role in bilateral trade, he said, "Karachi serves as the primary hub for trade between our two nations, with many of the businesspeople engaged in trade with Thailand also being members of this esteemed Chamber. This underscores our strong desire to engage with KCCI, which represents a significant segment of Karachi's business community." The Ambassador also touched on the importance of reducing the cost of doing business, particularly through innovations like the ASEAN Single Window system—a paperless platform for customs clearance within ASEAN countries. "We believe this system could be extended to trade

partners of ASEAN, including Pakistan, to reduce business costs. Pakistan's FTA with Malaysia makes you people eligible to benefit from the ASEAN single window paperless clearance system." He proposed organizing an ASEAN Trade Fair in Karachi, where buyers and sellers from Pakistan and ASEAN countries could meet to explore business opportunities. "Karachi is an ideal location for such an event, given its central position and strategic importance." Speaking on the occasion, Consul General of Thailand in Karachi Surashete Boontinand announced the introduction of an e-visa facility that allows applicants to apply for visas to Thailand online, eliminating the need to visit the Consulate in person. "This new facility aims to make it easier for Pakistani citizens to visit Thailand, and we are committed to providing full support to facilitate trade and bilateral relations", he added.

## Arab League summit on Gaza postponed to March 4: Egypt

CAIRO: An extraordinary Arab League meeting on Gaza, initially set for next week, has been postponed to March 4, host Egypt said on Tuesday. The Egyptian foreign ministry said the new date was agreed with Arab League members as part of "substantive and logistical preparations" for the summit. The meeting was called in response to US President Donald Trump's proposal to take over the war-battered Gaza Strip and move its Palestinian inhabitants elsewhere, including to Egypt and Jordan. On Thursday, Saudi Arabia is set to host the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to present their own plan for Gaza's reconstruction while ensuring that Palestinians remain on their land. Trump's Gaza plan has sparked outcry across the Arab world, prompting a rare show of unity among Arab nations to block it.—APP

## Thousands of Indian investors lose \$100m in Ponzi scheme

HYDERABAD: Thousands of investors in India are scrambling to recoup nearly \$100 million after they were caught in a Ponzi scheme that duped them into making short-term investments promising high returns, according to a police statement and multiple victims Reuters spoke to. Indian police arrested two individuals on Saturday after a case was filed against Falcon Invoice Discounting, which promised returns of up to 22 percent by claiming to connect depositors with the likes of Amazon and biscuit maker Britannia. Falcon collected 17 billion rupees (about \$196 million) from nearly 7,000 investors since 2021 but has repaid only half, according to a statement from police in the southern state of Telangana. Ankit Bihani, a New Delhi-based jeweler, met with 50 other investors last week to discuss measures, including legal remedies, to recoup the collective 500 million rupees they said they had lost. "Most of them (investors) got to know about the investing platform through social media and invested in it," Bihani said. Falcon used the money from new investors to pay out older ones and diverted the remaining funds to various shell entities, the police said. Authorities are hunting for Amardeep Kumar, Falcon's founder and the main accused, a source said. However, some of the victims that Reuters spoke to are left wondering if they will recoup the money — entire life savings, in some cases — they entrusted to Falcon.—APP

## CCP, PFA join hands to protect consumers

The MoU will strengthen both organizations by facilitating collaboration on matters of mutual interest

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) and the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) inked Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance co-operation to deter deceptive marketing and improve consumer protection in matters related to food products claims and labelling. The MoU signing ceremony, held at the head office of the Directorate General, Punjab Food Authority (PFA), was officiated by Mr. Salman Amin, Member CCP, and Mr. M. Asim Javid, Director General PFA, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. At the signing ceremony, Member CCP highlighted the expertise of both organizations and how they can collaborate under their respective legal frameworks. He emphasized that the Office of Fair Trade and the Marketing Intelligence Unit at CCP play a key role in preventing deceptive marketing and false claims by businesses. These units ensure that product claims are backed by credible evidence. He further stated that PFA's technical facilities and established standards will support this effort, benefiting consumers and promoting fair competition. It was also discussed that PFA's testing facilities will assist CCP in verifying claims made by businesses in the food and beverage industry during legal proceedings. The Additional Director General of PFA briefed attendees about PFA's regional offices across the provinces and its expertise in the technical analysis of food products. He also outlined the formal procedures established by PFA for the approval of food product labels. The MoU will strengthen both organizations by facilitating collaboration on matters of mutual interest. It aims to promote efficient data sharing and detailed analysis, supporting evidence-based decision-making and enforcement by both entities. The CCP is a statutory body mandated under Competition Act, 2010, to protect and promote competition in Pakistan's economy by addressing anti-competitive practices, including deceptive marketing practices. Whereas, PFA is a statutory body responsible under Punjab Food Authority Act, 2011, for formulating standards, procedures, processes, and guidelines related to food, including food businesses, food labelling, and food additives, and for enforcing these under the powers vested under PFA Act.—DNA

## Lebanese govt to seek new IMF program

BEIRUT: Lebanon's new government will negotiate with the International Monetary Fund for a new program and will work to deal with the country's financial default and public debt, according to a policy statement approved by the cabinet late on Monday. The statement, a copy of which was reviewed by Reuters, said the government would work for an economic revival that could only be achieved through restructuring the banking sector. The statement did not include language used in previous years that was seen to legitimize a role for the Iran-backed Hezbollah in defending Lebanon, saying instead "we want a state that has the decision of war and peace.—APP

## Vietnam parliament approves plan for leaner govt

HANOI: Vietnam's National Assembly on Tuesday approved a bold bureaucratic reform plan that will slash up to a fifth of government bodies, as the country tries to cut costs and improve administrative efficiency. The number of government ministries will be reduced to 14 from the current of 18, to be up and running from March 1, the assembly said in a statement. More than 97 percent of the lawmakers present approved the plan. The assembly earlier on Tuesday passed an amendment to a law on organizing government.—APP

## Calls mount for lifting of Western sanctions on Syria

The Caesar Act in the United States was designed to punish the Assad government, but in a post-Assad world, its broad and indefinite restrictions risk harming civilians without advancing clear human rights objectives

LONDON: Sanctions imposed on the regime of former Syrian President Bashar Assad by the West are harming the country's recovery, Human Rights Watch said on Tuesday. Sanctions put in place by the US, the UK, the EU and others are "hindering reconstruction efforts and exacerbating the suffering of millions of Syrians," and have no clear removal mechanism, HRW added. Hiba Zayadin, HRW's senior Syria researcher, said the country "is in desperate need of reconstruction and Syrians are struggling to survive. With the collapse of the former government, broad sanctions now stand as a major obstacle to restoring essential services such as health care, water, electricity, and education." HRW said the country's long-running civil war has left

its economy and infrastructure devastated, with millions of people having fled and 90 percent of the remaining population living in poverty. Around 13 million are unable to access sufficient food, and 16.5 million are reliant on humanitarian aid. The organization said sanctions, some of which have been in place for almost half a century but which were ramped up by the West in 2011 after the outbreak of the conflict, are making it harder to alleviate this suffering and to deliver aid despite humanitarian exemptions. HRW said sanctions should be lifted to allow "access to basic rights," including "restoring Syria's access to global financial systems, ending trade restrictions on essential goods, addressing energy

fuel and electricity, and providing clear legal assurances to financial institutions and businesses to mitigate the chilling effect of overcompliance." US sanctions hinder nearly all trade and financial transactions with Syria, while the Caesar Act sanctions foreign companies doing business with the government, "particularly in oil and gas, construction, and engineering," HRW said. EU and UK sanctions focus largely on Syrian crude oil exports, investments, and the activities of Syrian banks. Western powers have proposed changes to the sanctions regime since Assad's ouster in December, but the head of the Syrian Arab Republic's Investment Agency, Ayman Hamawiye, said earlier this year that the only concrete changes — tweaks to US sanc-

tions affecting energy remittance payments — were "inadequate" so far. "Rather than using broad sectoral sanctions as leverage for shifting political objectives, Western governments should recognize their direct harm to civilians and take meaningful steps to lift restrictions that impede access to basic rights," Zayadin said. "A piecemeal approach of temporary exemptions and limited waivers is not enough. Sanctions that harm civilians should immediately be lifted, not refined." HRW said Syria requires at least \$250 billion to begin its reconstruction, focusing on essential infrastructure. It highlighted the crumbling water network and overwhelmed healthcare system as two examples in desperate need of

financial help, as well as the education sector, with around 2 million Syrian children out of fulltime school. HRW said sanctions should not "have a disproportionately negative impact on human rights or create unnecessary suffering," and "should not be punitive, but should instead be designed to deter and correct human rights abuses." It added: "To be effective, sanctions must be tied to clear, measurable, and attainable conditions for their removal, with regular monitoring to assess progress." The Caesar Act in the United States was designed to punish the Assad government, but in a post-Assad world, its broad and indefinite restrictions risk harming civilians without advancing clear human rights objectives.—Agencies

## Briefs

### ECP fixes Punjab LG polls case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has scheduled a hearing on the Punjab local government elections case. The Punjab chief secretary and the Punjab Local Government secretary have been summoned in person on Feb 26. The notice stated that multiple opportunities were given for legislation on Punjab's local government elections, but no response was received from the Punjab government. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan's notice, the tenure of Punjab's local government institutions ended on December 31, 2021.

### Arab League summit on Gaza postponed

CAIRO: An extraordinary Arab League meeting on Gaza, initially set for next week, has been postponed to March 4, host Egypt said on Tuesday. The Egyptian foreign ministry said the new date was agreed with Arab League members as part of "substantive and logistical preparations" for the summit. The meeting was called in response to US President Donald Trump's proposal to take over the war-battered Gaza Strip and move its Palestinian inhabitants elsewhere, including to Egypt and Jordan. On Thursday, Saudi Arabia is set to host the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to present their own plan for Gaza's reconstruction while ensuring that Palestinians remain on their land. Trump's Gaza plan has sparked outcry across the Arab world, prompting a rare show of unity among Arab nations to block it. - Agencies

### PIA flight narrowly avoids accident

DNA

KARACHI: A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight en route from Lahore to Dubai narrowly escaped a major accident after a bird strike. The incident occurred when the bird collided with the engine of the Airbus aircraft on flight PK 203. The captain promptly contacted the air traffic controller and requested permission for an emergency landing. The aircraft, carrying over 150 passengers, was safely landed by the captain. PIA's engineering team will be dispatched from Karachi via flight PK 304 to Lahore Airport for further inspection. The team will perform a borescopic inspection to assess any damage to the aircraft's engine caused by the bird strike. Earlier, PIA resumed its flights to the EU and hoped to regain flight operations to the United Kingdom (UK) after a hiatus of over four years.

# Envoy reiterates Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting Pakistan

## Ambassador AKAMATSU hosts a reception to celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, hosted a reception at Serena Hotel in Islamabad on the evening of 18th February. The chief guest H.E. Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, along with other dignitaries graced the occasion. After welcoming the guests and celebrating the 7th birthday since His Majesty's enthronement, Ambassador AKAMATSU, since his arrival in Pakistan in the late November 2024, had met hundreds of Pakistani people and said he was encouraged by many favourable remarks about Japan and the expectation to strengthen the ties with Japan, and realised that "there still lies an unlimited space for cooperation between our two countries."

On the international stage, mentioning that "currently it is our urgent task to restore the peace and stability of the international society, as the rule of law is being challenged in many ways," and emphasized that "Japan is committed to cooperating with Pakistan in order to bring harmony and cooperation to this divided international society."

In terms of bilateral relations, Ambassador AKAMATSU reiterated Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting Pakistan based on its over 70 years of experience in providing Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Pakistan. Such assistance is in accordance with Japan's "assistance philosophy of 'not only providing fish, but also teaching how to fish,' based on mutual respect and collaboration," he said. Ambassador AKAMATSU also expressed his hope for more human resource exchanges and cultural interaction between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Jam Kamal Federal Minister for Industries, Ambassador of Japan AKAMATSU Shuichi, PPP leader Sherry Rehman, Acting Dean of Diplomatic Corps, Tariq Fatemi and others cutting cake to celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. - DNA

On the occasion of the Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai from April till October this year, he encouraged more Pakistani people to visit Japan with referring the saying 'seeing is believing.' Ambassador Akamatsu concluded his remarks by

wishing that more active exchanges between Japan and Pakistan lead to a friendship that meets the demand of this new age. The reception was joined by the students of the Islamabad Japanese School, who performed traditional Japanese drums and a

folk dance called 'So-ran bushi'. It also featured the exhibitions of Ikebana and Bonsai arts, contributed by Lahore Sogetsu Study Group and Lahore Bonsai Society, and the displays by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japanese companies.

## Dar calls for united Muslim effort to support Palestine

Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's support for peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes that affect the Muslim countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia in accordance with principles of the UN charter

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has urged the Muslim countries to work collectively to preserve the interests of Palestine. He was addressing the OIC group meeting at the ambassadorial level in New York. Ishaq Dar said the Gaza war has had catastrophic consequences for the Palestinian people. He further said that Pakistan supports the pursuit of diplomacy to preserve the Gaza ceasefire agreement and the negotiation and implementation of its second and third phases. Deputy Prime Minister urged to rigorously oppose proposals for the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland. He added that we must initiate concrete steps to secure the two-state solution. Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pa-

kistan's unwavering support for the just struggle of the Kashmiri people and called upon the international community to seek a peaceful resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and wishes of the Kashmiri people. He also expressed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to advance the common objectives of the OIC at UN. Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's support for peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes that affect the Muslim countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia in accordance with principles of the UN charter. Pakistan has broken its diplomatic isolation through active diplomacy, with the country's economy now set to take off as a result of the hard work done by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar told members of the Pakistani community.

## Imran Khan remains firm: Salman Raja

He said PTI founder stands by its principles. Raja said Imran Khan has always talked about the principle and rule of law

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: PTI leader and counsel Barrister Salman Akram Raja has said that Adiala Jail administration staged a drama with PTI legal team, adding that after long wait when permission was granted them to enter jail, administration said meeting time has ended. Talking to media outside Adiala Jail Rawalpindi, Salman Raja said PTI legal team was waiting and seeking permission for meeting Imran Khan from 1 pm. He said with such tactics PTI cannot be forced to compromise on its principle stand. Raja said only the five members of the family met Imran Khan. Aleema Khan told them that the Imran Khan's health was completely fine. He said that blocking the legal counsel way is childish act.

## Volodymyr Zelensky meets Erdogan amid US shift

Top Erdogan aide Fahrettin Altun on Monday said the pair would discuss how to "further strengthen cooperation" between their two nations

ISTANBUL: Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in Ankara on Tuesday, as Kyiv seeks to shore up its position in response to US-Russia talks. Zelensky flew into the Turkish capital from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) late on Monday, saying on Telegram he would discuss prisoner exchanges and other issues with Erdogan. The talks at Erdogan's presidential palace, which began around 1115 GMT, came several hours after top US and Russian diplomats met in Saudi for their first high-level talks since Moscow invaded Ukraine nearly three years ago. Zelensky, who last visited Turkey in March 2024, is himself due in Riyadh for a visit on Wednesday. Top Erdogan aide Fahrettin Altun on Monday said the pair would discuss how to "further strengthen cooperation" between their two nations. NATO member Turkey has sought to maintain good relations with its warring Black Sea neighbors, with Erdogan pitching himself as a key go-between and possible peacemaker between the two. Ankara has provided drones for Ukraine but shied away from Western-led sanctions on Moscow. Alongside Saudi and the UAE, Turkey has played a role in brokering several prisoner swap deals between Russia and Ukraine which have seen hundreds of prisoners returning home despite the ongoing conflict. Earlier on Tuesday, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met in Riyadh with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio as part of what the Kremlin says is a bid to re-open ties with Washington. US and Russian officials are eyeing a summit between their two leaders, with Europe and Kyiv worried they will try to end the war in Ukraine without them. - Agencies

## 'Only bad news coming from Adiala jail': Maryam

Punjab CM blasts Imran's letter-writing spree for "pleading to be saved"

DNA

Narawal: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz launched another diatribe against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Tuesday, saying that good news was coming from every corner of the country, except Adiala jail, where PTI founder Imran Khan is incarcerated. "Good news is coming from every corner of the country...only bad news is coming from Adiala Jail," Maryam said while addressing the first public gathering in Narawal since assuming the chief minister's office. She also took a dig at Imran's

letter-writing spree to Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, saying that he was "pleading to be saved". The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician, who has been behind bars since August 2023, penned three "open letters" to the army chief in recent weeks, which he claimed were written "because all democratic avenues had been obstructed". In earlier letters, Imran pointed out what he claimed was a growing distance between 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. However, COAS Munir denied receiving a letter from the PTI founder, stating that even if he did receive it, he wouldn't bother reading it.

## Experts call CPEC a game-changer for Pakistan's growth



President Asif Ali Zardari sees Gwadar as key to future prosperity. Mushahid hails Trump's economic vision as it's not driven by cold war

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The International Conference on "Regional Connectivity & Pakistan: Emerging Opportunities", organized by Pakistan-China Institute (PCI), Islamabad Think Tank brought together high-level government officials, diplomats, business leaders, and experts to discuss Pakistan's pivotal role in fostering regional connectivity, trade expansion, and investment opportunities. The conference, struc-

tured into three sessions, provided a platform for open discussions reaffirming Pakistan's strategic importance in linking South Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf, and China. The event was moderated by Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director, Pakistan-China Institute, who highlighted Pakistan's resilience in a turbulent neighborhood. He emphasized that despite enduring significant economic erosion, key indicators suggest the country is steadily regaining its trajectory toward progress. He under-

scored Pakistan's strategic position on the world map and its demographic dividend, noting that with 60% of the population under 35 years old, the nation holds immense potential for growth and development. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute, in his introductory remarks, underscored Pakistan's pivotal role as a regional connectivity hub, linking South Asia, China, Central Asia, and the Gulf. He highlighted the success of CPEC, which has attracted \$26 billion in investments, transforming Pakistan's economic landscape while positioning Gwadar Port and the newly developed Gwadar International Airport as key regional transit hubs.

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