



Islamabad POST

Thursday, February 20, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Iga Swiatek dominates to reach quarter-finals at Dubai tennis c'ship

Detailed News On Page-06

Trump lives in 'disinformation space': Zelensky

Detailed News On Page-08



External forces involved in Kurram: CM KP

Detailed News On Page-08



Pakistan refutes accusation

No mistreatment of Afghans refugees

Foreign Office says Islamabad has extensively engaged the Afghan side to ensure smooth repatriation of Afghan nationals

ASNAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In response to media queries regarding remarks of the acting Afghan Cd'A on mistreatment of Afghan refugees by Pakistan, the Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said Pakistan had noted the remarks made by the acting Afghan Charge d' Affaires in Islamabad, about Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan. His assertions regarding mistreatment of Afghan nationals are misplaced. 'I would like to remind him that Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghans for decades with respect and dignity, while extending traditional hospitality, sharing its resources and services such as education and health, even with very little international support'. The Spokesman further said as regards aliens, Pakistan started IFRP in 2023, and put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that no one is mistreated or harassed during the repatriation process. In this connection, we also extensively engaged the Afghan side to ensure smooth repatriation of Afghan nationals. While Pakistan has done what it could, we expect interim Afghan authorities to create conducive conditions in Afghanistan, so that these returnees are fully integrated in the Afghan society. The real test of Afghan authorities would be to ensure that rights of these people about whom the Afghan Cd'A talked are protected in Afghanistan, he added.

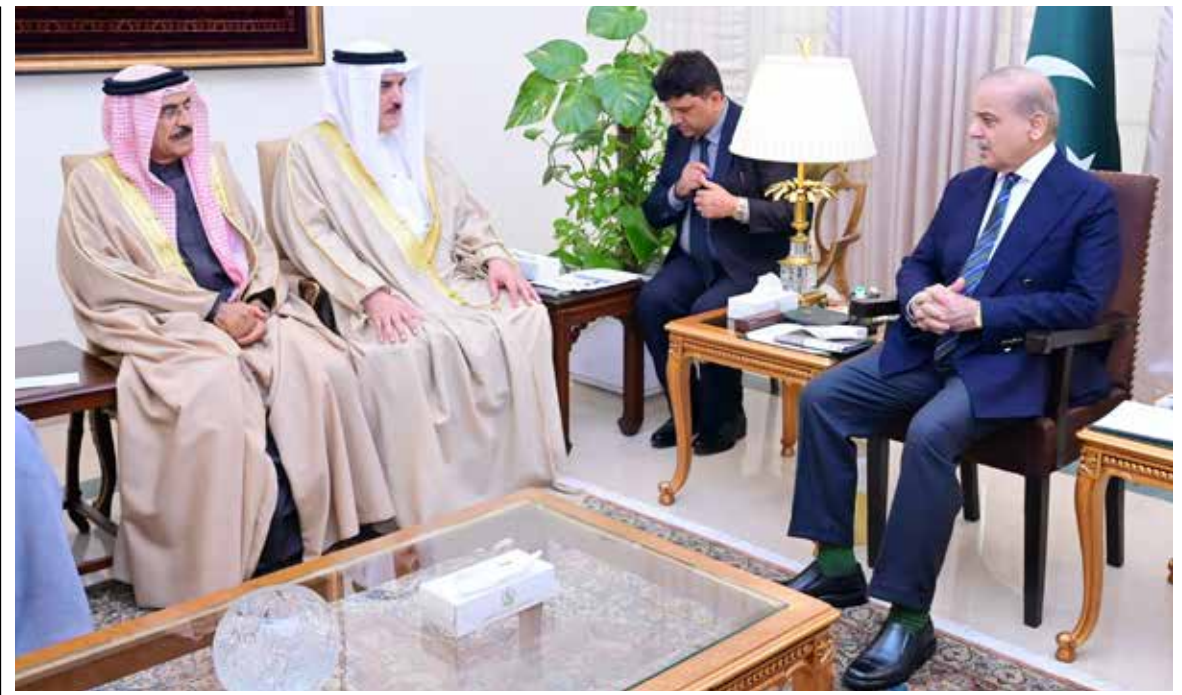
Pakistan seeks UN support in countering cross-border terrorism

UN chief Guterres thanks FM Dar for Pakistan's active engagement at UN, hails Pak's role for int'l peace

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: As Pakistan is reeling from a surge in militant attacks, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has sought support from the United Nations for countering cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan. The statement came after Deputy PM Dar held a meeting with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in New York, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office on Wednesday. During the meeting, Dar highlighted cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan and called for UN support in countering terrorism within and from Afghanistan. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to provide humanitarian support to the millions of destitute people in Afghanistan and to promote its economic development, including through implementing connectivity projects between Central Asia and Pakistan through Afghanistan, the communique added. Pakistan has been reeling under increased terrorist attacks targeting law enforcers and security forces since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021, particularly in the bordering provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The country witnessed a sharp increase in terror attacks in January 2025, surging by 42% compared to the previous month, according to data released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), a think tank. FM Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's strong support for the UN's central role in addressing global challenges, including peace and

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam, Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. Ambassador of Bahrain to Pakistan Ebrahim M Abdulqader is also present. - DNA

PM, CJP discuss security challenges

Prime Minister requested the top judge to ensure timely decisions on these cases based on merit

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi at the Chief Justice House in Islamabad. The Prime Minister congratulated the Chief Justice on assuming his responsibilities and expressed good wishes. The Prime Minister appreciated the Chief Justice's initiative to visit remote areas of South Punjab, Interior Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to consult with all stakeholders for effective

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Cop guarding polio team shot dead

Official says despite the attack, campaign continues in all areas except the site of the incident

DNA

PESHAWAR: Gunmen shot dead a police officer guarding a polio vaccination team on Wednesday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district, close to the Afghan border, police said. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only countries where polio is endemic and militants have for decades targeted vaccination teams and their security escorts. Polio has resurged in Pakistan, with two cases reported so far this year, and at least 74 polio infections

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Reaffirmed solidarity with Palestinians

PM invites Bahraini investors to invest in Pakistan's economy

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasised strong Pakistan-Bahrain ties and urged greater trade and investment

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended an invitation to Bahraini investors to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan, emphasizing the strong brotherly ties between the two nations. The statement was made during a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and an 11-member Bahraini parliamentary delegation led by Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam, Speaker of Bahrain's Council of Representatives, in Islamabad. During the meeting, Prime Minister Sharif conveyed his best wishes to Bahrain's King, Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to deepening bilateral relations. He highlighted that Pakistan and Bahrain share strong historical, religious, and cultural ties, and emphasized the importance of enhancing people-to-people exchanges to further strengthen diplomatic and economic cooperation.

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Consultations underway to regulate digital currency

PM said this during a meeting of the Economic Advisory Council

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced that consultations are ongoing regarding the regulation of digital currency in Pakistan. The statement was made during a meeting of the Economic Advisory Council, which was chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by various council members. The participants expressed confidence in government

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Champions Trophy opener New Zealand crush Pakistan by 60 runs

Pakistan fast bowlers fail to perform; main batsmen disappoint once again

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: New Zealand grabbed a 60-run victory against Pakistan with contribution of Will O'Rourke's three and Mitchell Santner's two in the opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 played at the National Bank Stadium, Karachi, on Wednesday. Chasing a daunting 321-run target, the home side could accumulate 260 before getting bowled out in the 48th over despite half-centuries from Babar Azam and Khushdil Shah. Pakistan had a dismal start to the pursuit as they were reduced

to 22/2 in 10 overs with skipper Mohammad Rizwan (three) and Saud Shakeel (six) falling cheaply. Following the early hiccup, Fakhar Zaman joined Babar in the middle in a bid to launch recovery. The pair, however, could add 47 runs to the total as Fakhar fell victim to Michael Bracewell in the 21st over after scoring 24 off 41 deliveries with the help of four boundaries. Vice-captain Salman Ali Agha then offered some fight-back with a blistering 42-run cameo until falling victim to Nathan Smith in the 31st over. Pakistan then lost two more wickets in quick succession, including that of their ace batter Babar Azam, and consequently

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Briefs

Vawda slams sale of KPT land

Senator Faisal Vawda expressed outrage over the alleged undervaluation of 500 acres of prime Karachi Port land

FIAZ CH.

ISLAMABAD: A Senate committee has raised alarms over the allotment of Karachi Port land worth Rs40 billion for just Rs5 billion, calling it a "mega scandal" and demanding an urgent investigation. The revelation was made during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs, chaired by Senator Faisal Vawda. During the session, Vawda expressed outrage over the alleged undervaluation of 500 acres of prime Karachi Port land, arguing that the market value of the property was well over Rs60 billion. He questioned how such a deal was approved without formal clearance from the relevant authorities.

PTI seek permission for rally

PTI has sought authorization for the gathering in connection with Pak Resolution Day

DNA

LAHORE: The PTI has formally submitted a request to the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore seeking permission to hold a public gathering at Minar-e-Pakistan on March 22. The application was filed by PTI Punjab Vice President Akmal Khan Bari, emphasizing the party's right to conduct a peaceful rally. According to the application, PTI has sought authorization for the gathering in connection with Pakistan Resolution Day, which falls on March 23. The party has urged authorities to allow the peaceful event, citing its significance in promoting the ideology behind the historic Pakistan Resolution.

Vows to prevent instability

No room for artificial political crisis: Nawaz

People won't allow anyone to obstruct journey of development, says PML-N president

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: As the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) plans to launch another anti-government movement after Eid-ul-Fitr, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday vowed to block attempts aimed at creating an "artificial political crisis" in the country. "[The] people of Pakistan will no longer allow anyone to obstruct the journey of development and progress," the former three-time prime minister said during a meeting with PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui in Raiwind. After talks between the government and the opposition collapsed, the PTI made another push to establish a grand alliance against the federal government with party founder Imran Khan ordering to expedite "contact with other opposition parties for protests after Eid". In April last year, the PTI formed a multi-party opposition alliance named Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan, comprising

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'Imran offered deal to overturn disqualification'

Asad Qaiser rules out backdoor talks with anyone, says no dialogue being held with federal govt

SHAHMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Amid reports of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) seeking backdoor talks, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) chief Sahibzada Hamid Raza has claimed that an offer being made to Imran Khan for the nullification of his disqualification. "The PTI founder did not demand the release of any [party] leader during the talks [with the government]. But in fact, an offer is being made to set aside his

Continued on Page 06

'Why mily courts weren't abolished in 21st amend'

Justice Aminuddin Khan says apex court was not under trial; Justice Mandokhail asks if four years of military courts had eliminated terrorism

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar questioned on Wednesday why military courts were not nullified in the 21st Constitutional Amendment. The judge, part of the seven-member constitutional bench led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the intra-court appeal against the trial of civilians in military courts. Representing Aitzaz Ahsan during the hearing, lawyer Latif Khosa objected to arguments made the previous day by Salman Akram Raja, stating that Raja was also his lawyer. He said Raja had disagreed with Justice Munib Akhtar's decision, whereas he fully agreed with it and had given no such instructions to Raja. Meanwhile, Raja clarified that he had only disagreed with one paragraph of Justice Munib's decision and said that he stood by his arguments made a day earlier, adding that the impression created in the media was misleading. Addressing Justice Naem Akhter Afghan, Raja said that his question regarding the absence of an international ban on civilians' court-martial was widely highlighted in headlines. To this, Justice Afghan said that his question was clear, advising against paying attention to social media as they did not do so themselves. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail

LHC sets aside order to remove NADRA chairman

Petitioner contended to declare appointment of serving military officer as NADRA chairman

COURT REPORTER

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Wednesday accepted the federal government's appeal, setting aside the single-bench verdict that had ordered the removal of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) chairman. A two-member bench, led by Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal, delivered the verdict. On September 6 last year, the Lahore High Court declared the appointment of Lieutenant General Munir Afsar as NADRA chairman null and void. The federal government had subsequently challenged the single-bench ruling. The federal government, in its plea, contended that the single bench had issued its ruling in contradiction to the fact. The government's counsel informed the court that the

petition had initially challenged only the notification issued by the caretaker government regarding the appointment. The counsel further stated that the petition remained restricted to the caretaker government's notification and never contested the newly introduced rules. He urged the court to overturn the single-bench decision that had removed Lieutenant General Munir Afsar from his position as NADRA chairman. On the other hand, the petitioner, Ashba Kamran, had contended that the caretaker government had amended NADRA regulations to facilitate the appointment of a serving military officer. She argued that the caretaker administration had no authority to interfere in permanent policy matters. The petitioner had requested the court to nullify

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remarked that the media should be cautious in reporting, while Justice Musarrat Hilali stated that although she often wanted to respond to news about her, her position as a judge did not allow it. Continuing on, Khosa argued that the entire nation was watching the case and claimed that the SC itself was under trial. However, Justice Aminuddin disagreed and noted that the court was not under trial and would decide according to the Constitution and law. The counsel further contended that the Holy Quran and Islamic teachings also emphasised judicial independence and further referenced instances from Islamic history. In response, Justice Mandokhail said that judicial independence existed even during the era of the Rashidun Caliphs. According to the lawyer, Section 2 (d) was against Islamic teachings and that military trials were held in secrecy. However, Justice Amin-ud-Din responded by saying that Khawaja Harris had already explained that a proper procedure for fair trials existed, and it was a separate issue if it was not followed. Pointing out Khosa's extensive career in politics, Justice Mandokhail asked what steps had he taken to repeal Section 2(d) during his time in various key positions, adding that Parliament was free to abolish it if needed.

Continued on Page 06

Promotion of literature, culture on top priority: Kundi

PESHAWAR :Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday stressed the crucial role of literature and culture in social development, saying that fostering education and literature is essential for creating a prosperous and civilized society. He said this during a meeting with the delegation of prominent literary figures at the Governor House. The delegation, led by Professor Gulzar Jalal Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Academy of Letters, included renowned poets, writers, and researchers such as Professor Abaseen Yousafzai, Professor Nasir Ali Syed, Professor Ishaq Wardag, Professor Aseer Mengal, Samina Qadir, Kulsoom Zeb, Shams Mohmand, and Amjad Al Khadem. During the meeting, the delegation discussed various issues related to the promotion of literature and culture in the province. They highlighted the challenges faced by literary figures and presented proposals for initiatives such as book fairs, literary conferences, and programs to encourage young writers. The delegation also emphasized the importance of preserving Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's literary traditions and cultural heritage. The delegation informed the Governor that poets and writers, being a sensitive group, are facing difficulties due to the lack of government support. They pointed out issues such as the publication of books, organizing literary conferences, and other related challenges. Governor Kundi said that fostering education and literature is essential for creating a prosperous and civilized society. He assured the delegation of his full support in addressing the challenges faced by literary figures and expressed the government's commitment to facilitating literary activities. —APP

PITB launches registration for new 'SheWins' batch

LAHORE: The Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) has opened registration for its "SheWins" training programme, designed to equip women with essential digital skills and support their career development. The programme offers both on-campus and online training courses, enabling female candidates to choose between courses in e-Commerce with Social Media Marketing & SEO and YouTube Content Creation & Video Editing.

The five-week on-campus training is available at a discounted fee of Rs. 20,000, while the online training course is offered for Rs. 15,000. Many women have already benefited from this initiative and launched their own online businesses, marking a significant step towards economic empowerment. — Agencies

Experts call for gender responsive water policies

Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Government of Pakistan said that despite Pakistan's minimal contribution to climate change, various organizations are proactively working together to safeguard the country's future

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Speakers and participants at the joint PODA and WaterAid consultative workshop stressed the importance of policymakers, politicians, and other stakeholders actively engaging women in all aspects of water resource management and related decision-making processes. This call to action seeks to recognize and support the vital role women and vulnerable communities play in managing water resources, especially in the context of droughts, disasters, and other climate-related challenges. A diverse gathering of stakeholders from various sectors convened at a local hotel, united by a common goal to amplify the voices and roles of women and vulnerable populations in addressing the pressing challenges of water management and governance in Pakistan, a country grappling with severe water stress, ranking 14th globally in terms of water scarcity. This workshop was jointly organized by the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA) and WaterAid Pakistan here at a local hotel.

Speaking on the occasion in her keynote address, Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Government of Pakistan said that despite Pakistan's minimal contribution to climate change, various organizations



are proactively working together to safeguard the country's future. By taking concrete steps to protect vulnerable communities, these efforts aim to create a safer, more resilient Pakistan, ensuring a brighter future with better opportunities for generations to come. Pakistan is facing significant environmental challenges from water scarcity to rising temperatures. The media has a vital role in ensuring that these challenges are understood and acted upon by citizens and decision-makers alike, she added. "It is ironic that women, who

are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters, are often absent from different phases and levels of decision-making altogether where policies are formulated and funds are allocated," said Ms. Sameena Nazir, Executive Director of PODA. The workshop prioritized the development of gender-responsive, inclusive, and climate-resilient strategies within the legal and policy frameworks governing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). Its primary objectives were to address existing gaps, foster women's leadership in the WASH

sector, and guarantee universal and sustainable access to WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) services. Mian Muhammad Junah, Country Director of WaterAid Pakistan, emphasized the crucial role of all marginalized segments of society, including women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and transgender individuals, in shaping effective WASH-related policies. Their involvement is vital to ensuring that these policies have a broader and more positive impact on community well-being and development. Highlighting WaterAid's

approach to gender equality in WASH, Gender Advisor Ms. Raheema Panhwar emphasized that "we must break taboos surrounding critical issues like menstrual hygiene management, ensuring everyone has access to safe, dignified hygiene and sanitation facilities and services, leaving no one behind." Speaker from Emphasizing the vital role of water in efforts to cope with effects of climate change and build resilience, the participants called upon policymakers to acknowledge access to safe and clean drinking water as a fundamental constitutional right, essential for safeguarding the health, well-being, and livelihoods of Pakistani citizens. The speakers emphasized that the staggering burden of inadequate WASH services and poor sanitation on women and girls is alarming. Citing UNICEF statistics, they noted that women and girls spend approximately 200 million hours annually collecting water, equivalent to 8.3 million days or over 22,800 years. This disproportionate impact is further exacerbated by traditional gender roles, which assign women primary responsibility for household hygiene management and water collection. Furthermore, climate-induced disasters, including flooding and contamination of water sources, intensify these challenges, particularly in marginalized communities, where damaged sanitation systems and compromised health and hygiene conditions disproportionately affect women and girls.

Uraan Pak plan, implementation road-map reviewed

ISLAMABAD: The Senate's Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Special Initiatives on Wednesday examined the recently launched "Uraan Pakistan - 5Es National Economic Transformation Plan (2024-29)" and its implementation road map to a trillion-dollar economy by 2035. The committee meeting, chaired by Senator Quratulain Marri, was attended by Senators Shahadat Awan, Jam Saifullah Khan, Zeeshan Khanzada and Dr Afnan Ullah Khan, Secretary Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (M/O PD&SI) Awas Manzoor Sumra and senior representatives from relevant departments. The body received a comprehensive briefing on the five-year economic plan, during which the discussion centered on the challenges confronting the project, including population growth, weak exports and unstable development. The committee members stressed the importance of accurate statistics and comprehensive surveys to ensure informed decision-making. An overview of the project's 5Es framework was also presented before the parliamentarian. Senator Quratulain Marri expressed concern over the lack of progress in implementation, despite a clear vision for the initiative. While discussing strategies for leveraging technology to drive digitalization, she questioned how the country's digitalization efforts could be reconciled with the inconsistent state of internet access. It was reported that steps were being considered to expand coverage across various regions. —APP

MCAP-BNU media conference held

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

Islamabad: The 10th MCAP-BNU International Media Conference, organized by the Media and Communication Academic Professionals (MCAP) with kind support from UNESCO, was inaugurated by Dr Moeed Yusuf Vice Chancellor, BNU Lahore. The global conference has brought together leading academics, journalists, policymakers, media professionals, and scholars from ten countries, namely; the United States, Germany, Russia, Czechia, Sweden, Nigeria, Qatar, Egypt, the UAE, and Pakistan, to examine the role of media literacy in building informed, interconnected, and inclusive societies. While addressing the inaugural session, Dr Moeed Yusuf emphasized on the importance of and correct use of information in all spheres of life. He said,

"The most important aspect is to focus on how information can be transformed into knowledge. Our focus should be on ensuring excellence and brilliance in every field". Dr Moeed Yusuf also invited the visiting delegates for a Cricket training session at the campus, keeping in mind the hosting of Champions Trophy and revival of the game in Pakistan. The theme for this year is "Bridging Divides: Media Literacy for Informed and Connected Societies," and with it the conference aims to address the pressing need for critical media engagement in an age of misinformation, biased narratives, and digital manipulation. By providing participants with analytical tools and media literacy skills, the event seeks to strengthen social cohesion and encourage regional cooperation. The amazing speaker lineup includes: Senator Mushaid Hussain Sayed, H.E. Zhao Shiren, Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Lahore, Moeed Yusuf, VC-BNU, Prof. Dr.

Umaru A. Pate, VC Federal University Kashere, Nigeria, Prof. Dr. Lee Artz, Purdue University USA, Prof. Dr. Nico Carpentier, Professor, Charles University, Dr Bushra Hameedur Rehman, Dean SMCBNU, Senior Anchor Fahad Hussain, Muhammad Mallick, Syed Talat Hussain, among others. The 2-days conference will explore critical issues shaping the future of media and communication, through Plenary Sessions on Regional Information Challenges - Examining how media literacy can enhance regional connectivity, with a focus on initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); Critical Engagement with Entertainment Media - Discussing how media literacy can challenge harmful stereotypes and promote inclusive storytelling; Empowering Communities through Digital Inclusion - Emphasizing equitable access to digital technologies and media literacy education.

China-Pak jointly developed agricultural app

FAISALABAD: In the vast wheat fields of Punjab Province, drones are patrolling the air, and intelligent systems have replaced manual labor to take care of crops. Free from the pain of field labor during the broiling summer season, local farmers could accurately monitor fertilization and irrigation with just a few clicks on their mobile phones or tablets. "Previously, I could only see which fields performed well when it was almost harvest time. Now, I check crop health regularly on my mobile and can fix problems early, which has helped me improve yields and reduce losses," Muhammad Taj from Gujranwala, Punjab, marvels at the new agricultural artificial intelligence app, Kisan 360, newly installed on his phone. The

China-Pakistan co project Using Computer Vision to Realize High-Throughput Crop Monitoring for Climate-Smart Agriculture has injected sci-tech element into Punjab's farmland, with Kisan 360 is the result of their painstaking efforts. "We use drones equipped with visual recognition equipment to achieve intelligent management of crop monitoring, cultivation management, pest and disease analysis, and agricultural production, including growth determination, health monitoring, water requirement analysis, fertilization, and pesticide application," introduced Dr. Wu Jun, the Chinese project leader. Initially, local farmers expressed doubts about smart technology. "It's too complicated for us, and its effectiveness and practicality have not been proven."

The Pakistani team addressed their doubts by producing text guides and audio-visual materials on vegetation health maps in the local dialect and sharing them with farmers in real time. "I come from a farming family, understanding very well the problems faced by Pakistani farmers today, with severe heat waves and water shortages becoming our main challenges. Providing farmers with real-time data to help them optimize their planting decisions and ensure food security for their communities is urgent," Saqib Ali, a Pakistani researcher at the China-Pakistan Joint Laboratory for Agriculture, told Gwadar Pro. "Our AI APP now live on both the Apple App Store and Android Play Store. —APP

PN, RSNF bilateral exercise "Affaa al Sahel VII" concludes

DNA

KARACHI: The bilateral training exercise Affaa Al Sahel VII between the Special Operations Forces (SOFs) of Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) and Special Service Group of Pakistan Navy [SSG (N)] concluded with a high-intensity Final Test Exercise (FTX). Commander Coast, Rear Admiral Faisal Amin, along with senior military officials from both sides, witnessed the exercise. During the exercise, RSNF SOFs and SSG (N) teams demonstrated advanced tactics and drills,



including joint live-fire exercises, precision raid operations, and dynamic rappelling maneuvers in a simulated high-threat environment. The drills focused on counterterrorism response, hostage rescue scenarios, and coordinated maritime interventions, highlighting their ability to operate seamlessly under high-pressure situations. The successful conduct of Affaa Al Sahel VII reflects the growing cooperation between the RSNF and Pakistan Navy. The joint exercise aimed to enhance interoperability and tactical proficiency, further strengthening the capabilities of SOFs in addressing common maritime security challenges.



National Highway Authority (NHA) Invites e-Bids from Prospective Bidders, including Active NTN-Holding Companies, Firms, and Individuals, for Contracts Related to the Operations, Management, Maintenance, and Toll Collection at Toll Plazas on High-Traffic National Highways.

With National Highway Authority

ON THE PATHWAY TO PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

Embark on A New Journey

Attention Companies, Firms and Individuals, NHA Invites e-Bids

REMEMBER!

Last Date To Submit e-Bids

28 February 2025

at 11:00 AM

For more Information and to Download e-Bidding Documents for Free of Cost Visit Our Website:

www.ebidding.nha.gov.pk

OR

www.ppra.org.pk

Be a Part of National Progress!

Step into a Profitable Business, Transparent Process, and a Path to Success

S.No.	Route	Toll Plazas	Bid Security	NHA Net Reserve Price
1	N-5	QAZI AHMED	31,000,000	75,205,344
2	N-5	GHOTKI	28,000,000	69,954,997
3	N-5	UBARO	30,000,000	73,497,130
4	N-5	PATTOKI	26,000,000	64,012,276
5	LEBP	LAHORE EASTERN BYPASS	7,300,000	18,246,881
6	N-55	LARKANA KHAIRPUR (BRIDGE)	1,700,000	4,092,203
7	N-55	SEHWAN	5,000,000	12,330,246
8	BRIDGE AT N-5/N-55	SHAHEED BENAZIR	5,600,000	13,769,089
9	N-135	CHOWK SARWAR	3,100,000	7,534,808
10	N-135	FATEHPUR	3,100,000	7,485,652
11	M-8	RATODERO-I	650,000	1,534,242
12	M-8	RATODERO-II	1,400,000	3,251,176
13	N-55	MEHAR	3,900,000	9,551,601

PID (0) 5707-D/24

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



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051-2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital..9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

NUML commemorates Int'l French Teachers Day

Earlier in the day, the French and Romanian Ambassadors H.E Nicolas Galey and Dan Stoenescu, respectively, met with Rector NUML, Major General (Retd.) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M), in his office. Director General NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir, and other senior officials were also present in the meeting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The French Department of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) organized a special event to commemorate International French Teachers Day. His Excellency Nicolas Galey, the Ambassador of France to Pakistan, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The event was also attended by the Ambassador of Romania, H.E Dan Stoenescu, and senior officials from NUML. Earlier in the day, the French and Romanian Ambassadors H.E Nicolas Galey and Dan Stoenescu, respectively, met with Rector NUML, Major General (Retd.) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M), in his office. Director General NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir, and other senior officials were also present in the meeting. The Call-on focused on strengthening academic collaboration, promoting cultural exchange programs, and enhancing educational excellence. Following the meeting, both the Ambassadors, along with the Rector and DG NUML, joined the celebrations of International French Teachers Day. The event commenced with a welcome address by Dean Faculty of Languages, Dr Jamil Asghar Jami, followed by a speech from Rector NUML, Maj Gen (Retd.) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI(M). The Rector paid tribute to French teachers, recognizing their invaluable contribution to language education. He emphasized that French, spoken by over 321 million people across five continents, thrives due to the dedication of its educators. He highlighted that French teachers serve as ambassadors of language, culture, and traditions, playing a crucial role in fostering inclusivity and equality in education. "Teaching is not just a profession—it is a passion and a mission," the Rector remarked. He lauded modern teaching methodologies for bringing innovation and creativity to language learning. He further noted that educa-



tors inspire future generations, nurturing values of diversity, solidarity, and peace. "Like athletes, language educators are champions of linguistic and cultural excellence," he added, encouraging students to see French not only as a communication tool but also as a symbol of person-

al and academic achievement. Addressing the gathering, H.E. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France, expressed gratitude to NUML for its unwavering support in promoting the teaching of foreign languages, particularly French. He acknowledged the efforts of French teachers

and the university in organizing the event. Commending NUML's role in fostering foreign language education, he emphasized that learning French opens doors to global opportunities and personal growth. He reiterated the importance of cultural exchanges and academic

collaboration in strengthening bilateral ties. During the ceremony, certificates were awarded to French language students who successfully qualified their DELF exams. Souvenirs were also presented to the French and Romanian Ambassadors as a token of appreciation.

Workshop to refine & standardize textbook review

ISLAMABAD: The National Curriculum Council (NCC) Wing of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training has launched a two-day workshop titled "Standardizing the Textbook Review Process," taking place here on February 19-20, 2025. This initiative aims to refine and standardize the textbook review process by bringing together experts from diverse educational backgrounds to ensure quality and effectiveness in curriculum implementation. Dr. Tabasum Naz, Director NCC, welcomed the participants and highlighted the workshop's objectives, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in enhancing textbook evaluation. She stressed the need for a hands-on approach to reviewing educational materials using well-defined criteria. Acknowledging the dedication of experts and stakeholders, she expressed appreciation for their active participation in this national effort. The workshop was honored by the presence of Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, as the Chief Guest. In his address, Mr. Wani highlighted the fundamental aspects of curriculum and textbook development, emphasizing the need for textbooks to not only deliver knowledge but also foster real-world understanding. He stressed that textbooks should clearly define the purpose and practical applications of each chapter, making learning more meaningful for students. He also discussed the integration of gamification and storytelling techniques to enhance engagement and comprehension. Furthermore, he advocated for the inclusion of hands-on, hypothesis-driven activities that promote experiential learning, enabling students to grasp concepts through practical application. Mr. Wani further emphasized the importance of embedding QR codes in textbooks to provide access to supplementary learning materials, ensuring that students can explore topics beyond the classroom. He underscored the need to publish multicolor textbooks for primary-level students, making educational content more visually appealing and engaging. Additionally, he highlighted the significance of incorporating contemporary subjects such as robotics and artificial intelligence, ensuring that students are prepared for the evolving demands of the modern world. Throughout the two-day workshop, participants will engage in discussions on various aspects of curriculum development, textbook design, and evaluation methodologies. Sessions will focus on best practices for textbook review, assessment strategies, and the broader process of educational material development. By promoting dialogue and collaboration, the workshop aims to establish a more effective and standardized approach to textbook review, ultimately enhancing the quality of education across Pakistan.—DNA

IGP holds open courts to address citizens' grievances

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, held two Khuli Katcheries (open courts) at the Central Police Office, on Wednesday. A public relation officer told APP that during the khuli katcheries, IG Rizvi listened to the issues of citizens and police officers and issued directives to senior police officers on the spot for timely resolution of their concerns. IG Rizvi said that resolving citizens' issues on merit is our top priority. Negligence and carelessness in duties will not be tolerated. Citizens facing any issue related to the police can come to the Khuli Katchery. My office is always open for my citizens, the IGP said. IG Rizvi further directed the officers to resolve the citizen grievances on merit within the stipulated time frame and report back to the Central Police Office. He directed all SD-POs and SHO's to adhere to the designated office hours and prioritize resolving citizens' issues. On this occasion, the IG Islamabad said that the Islamabad Police are taking various measures for the facilitation of citizens. The daily holding of Khuli Katchery helps in resolving issues on a priority basis, he added. Moreover, all zonal officers and SHO's are directed to meet citizens during the designated office hours and resolve their issues promptly and on merit.—APP

Zindagi nay mur kar Shaitan ke qatil ko dekha aur muskurai

Mazharul Islam's latest novel on decline of values hits bookstores

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Noted Urdu storyteller Mazharul Islam's latest work of fiction, a fantasy novel, "Zindagi Nay Mur Kar Shaitan Ke Qatil Ko Dekha Aur Muskurai" a combination of unique, abstract, surreal and allegorical themes has emerged on the literary horizon recently and is selling like hot cake and a subject of literary gossip today. Like his previous novel, "Sarus Cranes Apnay Khawbon Mai Say Urr Kar Ja Chukay Hain" which is a time-travel novel, in this novel (Zindagi Nay Mur Kar Shaitan Ke Qatil Ko Dekha Aur Muskurai) too, Mazhar experiments and breaks the conventional shackles of time and space, theme and diction we usually find in a novel. But Mazhar is not a 'usual' novelist, he loves to go against the current and this is something that singles

him out among his contemporaries. Although 'Zindagi Nay Mur Kar...' has come after a gap of two years (Sarus Crane was published in 2023) yet according to the writer, it took him 15 years to complete it. "Even prior to that, I had a vague idea of this novel when I was 8 years old, a student of Grade-4 at Mission High School," the writer tells his interviewer. The story is a complete work of fantasy but at the same time it has shades of magical realism and surrealism. The element of fantasy is so strong it takes the shape of a story and characters are born out of it so that the writer can convey his message to the readers. One comes across characters that are fast moving out of our life. Once they were considered a vital link such as postman, librarian, flower sellers, watchmakers, schoolteachers, mystics.

NSU achieves international accreditation

ISLAMABAD: City and Guilds UK, a global authority in skills development since 1876, has conferred international accreditation upon the National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad. This prestigious recognition shows the institution's commitment to delivering world-class vocational education, aligning its standards with global best practices, and ultimately empowering Pakistani youth to compete in international job markets. The accreditation, facilitated through the collaborative efforts of GEMS Middle East and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), heralds a new era of opportunity for skilled professionals in Pakistan. By securing this endorsement, the National Skills University Islamabad has solidified its standing as a center of excellence. Moreover, it has also unlocked new career pathways for its students, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and European countries—regions actively seeking technically proficient workers. According to Mr. Tabish Fareedi, Country Representative for City & Guilds UK, a Royal Chartered Institute has long been synonymous with excellence in vocational training. Its certification is regarded as a gold standard, equipping individuals with future-proof competencies essential for navigating the complexities of an evolving global workforce. The arrival of this accreditation in Pakistan is credited to the visionary leadership of NAVTTTC Chairperson Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad and her team. Their tireless efforts in elevating skills education and fostering international collaborations have made this milestone a reality, positioning Pakistan as a major contributor to the global vocational education landscape.—APP

Commuters demand more blue line buses

ISLAMABAD: Commuters residing near the Islamabad Expressway Wednesday demanded an increase in the number of Blue Line buses, citing chronic overcrowding that was disrupting their daily routines. According to them, the Blue Line bus service has become a vital part of the city's public transportation system but the current fleet is insufficient to meet the growing demand. For years, the Blue Line Bus service has been a vital lifeline for thousands of Islamabad residents, offering affordable transportation to various parts of the city. However, as Islamabad's population continued to grow at a rapid pace, the demand for Blue Line Buses significantly surpassed the available supply, creating a pressing need for expansion. A commuter Ayesha Khan said, "We often have to wait for over 30 minutes to get a Blue Line bus.—APP

JAN/FEB 2025

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Briefs

Pakistan receives over \$100m FDI from China in January 2025

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worth \$239 million in January 2025, with China emerging as the top investor, contributing 42.2% of the total inflows, according to the latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). During the month, FDI inflows from China stood at \$100.8 million, while outflows were recorded at a mere \$2.7 million, bringing the net FDI from China to \$98.1 million. China's Hong Kong also played a significant role, contributing \$20.6 million in FDI, with \$2.2 million in outflows, resulting in a net inflow of \$20.4 million. Other major investors included the United Kingdom (\$19.5 million), Switzerland (\$17.2 million), the United States (\$12.1 million), Kuwait (\$3.9 million), and Malta (\$3.8 million). In the first seven months of FY25 (July-January), Pakistan received \$ 2122.3 million (\$2.1223 billion) FDI from all foreign investors; however with \$ 598.7 million outflow the net FDI has stood at \$1523.6 million (\$1.5236 billion). In these seven months, Pakistan received a total FDI of \$902.2 million from China. However, with outflows amounting to \$268.6 million, the net FDI stood at \$633.6 million. China maintained its position as the largest investor, accounting for the bulk of the investment. Comparatively, during the same period in FY24, Pakistan received \$460.6 million in FDI from China, but outflows of \$342.6 million resulted in a net FDI of just \$118 million, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday.

Cement exports increase 24.85%

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cement witnessed an increase of 24.85 percent during the first seven months of the fiscal year 2024-25, as against the exports of the corresponding period of last year. The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$188.091 million during July-January (2024-25) against the exports of US \$150.653 million during July-January (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the cement export also rose by 35.34 percent from 3,896,244 metric tons to 5,273,028 metric tons, the data revealed. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the cement exports witnessed an increase of 40 percent during the month of January 2025 as compared to the same month of last year. The exports of cement from the country during January 2025 were recorded at US \$20.619 million against the exports of US \$14.728 million in January 2024. On a month-on-month basis, cement exports however decreased by 35.36 percent during January 2025 when compared to the exports of US \$31.898 million.—APP

Call to adopt intellectual property rights culture

The event was well attended by students and researchers and the interactive session underscored a strong desire for deeper knowledge on the subject

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: At a discussion hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Amb Farukh Amil, Chairman of Intellectual Property Rights Organization-Pakistan, emphasized that cultivating a culture of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) was essential for transforming Pakistan from a consumer nation into a startup nation. He also stressed the urgent need for increased awareness of IPR among the youth in Pakistan to facilitate this significant transformation.

In his keynote address, Amb Amil highlighted IPO-Pakistan's initiatives to join international IP treaties and to promote the use of IP tools, including trademarks, copyrights, patents, and geographical indications. Speaking on the occasion, Amb Jauhar Saleem, President of IRS, noted that this was an "age of branding" where Pakistan had been not been able to adopt and



brand its products resulting in economic stagnation. He underscored the importance of incentivizing innovation and creativity through fostering a culture of intellectual property rights, as

there was a general lack of motivation among people to innovate or invent without adequate safeguard of their intellectual property rights. He lauded the efforts of IPO in this regard and expressed willingness to collaborate on promoting awareness, research, and advocacy.

Amb Amil also explained how intellectual property rights (IPR) and national economic security were intertwined, as inadequate IPR can jeopardize food security and economic growth. He noted that countries gain recognition through their brands, and lamented that Pakistan is falling behind in this area. He emphasized the necessity of including IPR in the national curriculum to help students recognize the importance of protecting their rights early on, warning that its exclusion would make the IPR an elitist topic.

The event was well attended by students and researchers and the interactive session underscored a strong desire for deeper knowledge on the subject.

Water project for Gwadar from Tajikistan feasibility study finalized

Additionally, the two countries have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in June 2023 for bilateral cooperation in water conservation, watershed planning, flood control, drought relief, and environmental protection

ISLAMABAD: Feasibility study of water project, supplying water to Gwadar from Tajikistan has been finalised, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday announced the completion of a feasibility study for a water supply project aimed at providing water to the port city of Gwadar from Tajikistan. This project is expected to address the water scarcity issues faced by Gwadar and support its growing population and development needs. Speaking during the closing session of the International Conference on 'Regional Connectivity & Pakistan: Emerging Opportunities,' organized by the Pakistan-China Institute at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Zardari emphasized the complexity of the water supply route. He mentioned that the feasibility plan has been submitted to the Chinese government with the support of brotherly country UAE. President Zardari also reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening regional connectivity and economic cooperation, saying that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port would play a significant role in promoting regional trade and prosperity. He said that Pakistan's strategic location offered significant opportunities to enhance regional trade, terming the country as a "natural trade corridor" linking China, Central Asia, and the Middle East. President of the UAE-based Global Council of Tolerance and Peace, Ahmed Jarwan Al Mohammed, lauded Pakistan's efforts at promoting regional connectivity. He urged the need to build bridges and work together to promote tolerance, education, and business cooperation. During past many years Gwadar has been facing severe water scarcity issues. The city's growing population and development needs have put a strain on its water resources. To address this, Pakistan and China have been working together on several projects to solve the issue, including the inauguration of desalination plant in Gwadar. Additionally, the two countries have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in June 2023 for bilateral cooperation in water conservation, watershed planning, flood control, drought relief, and environmental protection.—DNA

PEC unites public and private universities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Engr Waseem Nazir has taken a historic step in uniting all 11 public and private universities of Southern Punjab on a single platform for the first time to address key challenges in engineering education. As part of PEC's nationwide engineering education reforms drive, brainstorming sessions and a consultative workshop were hosted by NFC Multan. The sessions brought together six key stakeholders—students, parents, alumni, faculty, industry and government officials—to engage in meaningful discussions. Prominent Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) participating in the

event included Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) Multan, MNS-UEET Multan, MNS-University of Agriculture Multan, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology (KFUEIT) Rahim Yar Khan, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Institute of Southern Punjab (ISP) Multan and Multan University of Science and Technology, among others. This landmark gathering provided a platform for HEIs to highlight pressing issues and foster dialogue for future reforms.

Addressing the consultative workshop, the chief guest, Engr. Waseem Nazir emphasized the need for inclusive engagement with all stakeholders to bridge the gap between academia and industry. He announced that

by the end of May, all 130 engineering HEIs across Pakistan will be covered through this consultative process, leading to policy recommendations aligned with the evolving demands of the international market. "All recommendations will be consolidated and presented at a mega event in Islamabad as part of the final round of discussions," he stated. During the workshop, HEI representatives proposed integrating software tools and professional certifications into the engineering curriculum to enhance graduates' skill sets.

Stakeholders also endorsed PEC's initiative on Generative AI, recognizing its transformative potential for engineering education and research. A key recommen-

dation was the establishment of a Center of Excellence Lab in the region to provide equal access to quality education for students across universities. Additionally, participants suggested conducting a 10-year review of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) model to evaluate its impact and effectiveness. Vice Chairman PEC, Dr. Suhail Aftab Qureshi, along with PEC Governing Body Members, also attended the workshop. The Chairman PEC expressed his gratitude to Vice Chancellor NFC, Gen (R) Engr. Moazzam Ejaz, NFC Administration and the Focal Person, Engr Muhammad Zeeshan Raza for hosting the sessions. The Vice Chancellor assured full support for PEC's reform initiatives.

Best way to reduce poverty is trade with India

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Wednesday that the best approach to reducing poverty in Pakistan is commerce with India. In the case of trade with India, the public will get affordable food items while industries will access cheap raw materials, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that India should stop destabilizing Pakistan and end the cold war, which will help both neighbors earn billions of dollars annually. He added that if trade with India opens, the process of importing agricultural products from distant countries will end, which will not only save billions of dollars but also stabilize foreign exchange reserves. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the people should not be deprived of this relief for the sake of politics, while India should stop conspiring to destabilize Pakistan. The business leader stated that the unnecessary political conflicts in this region are causing billions of people to suffer, thereby impeding the development process. India was unaffected by Pakistan's trade closure, but the people of Pakistan suffered greatly. Profiteers benefited the most from this closure, as they continued to fill their coffers through artificial shortages of important items. He said that Pakistan could provide relief to the people by importing food items from India without bargaining on its principled stand. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the two countries have not been able to gain anything due to tensions and border clashes. The World Bank has reported that the trade volume between Pakistan and India is only two billion dollars, but with better relations, it could reach 37 billion dollars. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that Pakistan can benefit from trade with India in many sectors, including banking, textiles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and others. In the case of better relations, Pakistan can also benefit in transit trade. Pakistan can earn billions of dollars by giving India access to Afghanistan and Central Asian states. Trade with India will be a blow to the profiteers and hoarders; therefore, they are opposing it. Similarly, some privileged industrial sectors are also not in favor of trade with India so that they can continue their plunder. He stated that policymakers should remember that, despite the tension, India and Bangladesh have achieved remarkable progress, while Pakistan persists in its plight.—DNA

Naqvi condemns terrorist incident in Barkhan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the terrorist incident in Barkhan. He expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic killing of seven passengers in the incident. He also extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved. He stated that we share the grief of the families of the martyrs, emphasizing that those who target innocent civilians do not deserve any leniency. He stressed that anti-state elements are hatching sinister conspiracies to create instability, but any such attempt will be foiled with the support of the nation.—APP

IFA takes bold steps to cut salt intake, promotes healthier eating

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) partnering with the Impact International Research Organisation has announced a new initiative to tackle the health risks linked to excessive salt consumption. Talking to media, Deputy Director Operations of IFA, Dr. Tahira Siddique said that the authority plans to enforce stricter sodium guidelines, raise public awareness, and encourage healthier eating habits. This move aims to address the rising prevalence of chronic diseases caused by high salt intake, such as hypertension, heart disease, and kidney problems. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), individuals should consume no more than 5 grams of salt daily. However, in Pakistan, the average daily intake exceeds 9 grams, largely due to the widespread consumption of processed and packaged foods, she said. Dr. Tahira explained that excessive salt consumption is a major contributor to serious health conditions, including high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, and kidney disease. The IFA's primary focus is on regulating sodium levels in processed and packaged foods. By setting clear standards and ensuring manufacturers comply, the authority aims to significantly reduce the amount of salt in everyday food products. Dr. Tahira emphasized that this approach will make it easier for consumers to choose healthier options without sacrificing taste or convenience. The goal is to achieve a 30% reduction in salt intake by 2025.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Students pose for group photo with principal Prof Najam un Nisa in annual funfair held at IMCG I-8/3 on Wednesday.—DNA

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 255

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

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Rise of agentic AI

IMAGINE a world where artificial intelligence (AI) agents could act as personal political advisers, negotiate for governments on foreign policy or carry out integrated military operations in war zones. These scenarios are increasingly possible with the emergence of agentic AI. Unlike generative AI – large-language models (LLMs) that create content – the hallmark of agentic AI is its ability to make decisions and carry out complex actions autonomously, with minimal human supervision. Agentic AI usually consists of teams of AI agents, some with specialised roles – such as gathering information or carrying out tasks – while others act as team leaders or orchestrators of activities. Agentic AI harnesses the cognitive abilities of LLMs, but combines these with other forms of machine learning and automation to make better decisions and take actions. Another key difference is agentic AI systems are goal-oriented, set to optimise particular objectives, such as maximising customer satisfaction or minimising the cost of a particular production process. Although nascent, agentic AI is attracting attention from businesses and governments because of its potential to supercharge productivity and efficiency. What has received less attention is its potential to drastically change the dynamics of geopolitical rivalry between nations. In particular, agentic AI is likely to alter the nature of the geopolitical contest across three interrelated spheres: techno-economics, influence and opinion-shaping, and the security, intelligence and military contest. Until recently, the techno-economic sphere has largely been a race between the United States and China for AI supremacy (or at least parity for China). The electrifying entry of DeepSeek – a low-cost, largely open-source model – into the generative AI space in late January caused US technology stocks to tumble and shattered assumptions of American AI supremacy. Does the arrival of China's low-cost DeepSeek mean the end of Nvidia's chip dominance? But the bigger story is the democratisation of core AI technologies and their availability to every nation, large or small, rich or poor. Developing economies will find it much easier to harness agentic AI systems to turbocharge work activities, address the skills gap and boost productivity. The US may step up export controls on high-end chips and tighten restrictions on foreign AI systems but, bit by bit, the techno-economic playing field is starting to even up. The contest for geopolitical influence – where nations and interest groups joust for control of political narratives or to sway public opinion – is also set to be transformed. While governments and malign actors have long used technology to sway opinion – think old-style radio propaganda or more recent manipulation of social media – agentic AI opens up unprecedented opportunities. AI has been used to gather data on citizen views and improve political deliberation. Agentic AI bots could act as personal "political whisperers", synthesising disparate views and data sources to help individuals arrive at an informed, fact-based decision. Research has shown AI can be at least as persuasive as humans in changing views on contentious issues such as assault weapon bans and carbon taxes, with AI messages viewed as being "more factual and logical, but less angry [and more] unique" than those from humans. Equally, however, agentic AI models could be used by malign actors to micro-target those susceptible to false narratives or quickly scale up misinformation in the mass media.



EU's insecurity conference

THANKS to US Vice-President J.D. Vance's now infamous speech blasting the European Union, the Munich Security Report may have attracted some curious readers such as yours truly. In light of his most unkind claims, it's almost prescient about America's unreliability. "The threat that I worry most about vis-a-vis Europe is not Russia, not China, it's not any other external actor. What I worry about is the threat from within, the retreat of Europe from some of its most fundamental values," he told a stunned audience at the annual security conference. At 151 pages, the report is not bedtime reading, but well worth a look. It's not for nothing that the chapter on America is called "Maga Carta: United States", a play on "Make America great again" with the Magna Carta, get it? The report itself is titled "Multipolarization", exactly the kind of term you expect EU bureaucrats and intellectuals to come up with, but probably won't take off. The authors do get edgy with some chapter titles. The one on China has subtitles such as "He Says, Xi Says", "The Emperor's New Boats", a reference to the new Chinese navy, and "Crazy Rich Asians? China's Economic Clout". I was half expecting a mention of film star Michelle Yeoh. The chapter on Russia is "The Czar's Gambit". Was it a reference to chess openings, the hit TV series The Queen's Gambit, starring Anya Taylor-Joy, the Russians' love of chess, or all of the above? Who knows? Unfortunately, the report wasn't written in a similarly irreverent tone. The first sentence kind of spoiled the fun: "Today's international system shows elements of unipolarity, bipolarity, multipolarity, and nonpolarity." So, everything everywhere all at once? Confused? Me too. It seems everyone these days, even US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, is talking about the multipolar world we are entering. For clarity, I went to my favourite international relations guru, an Australian historian called Jeff Rich who runs the wonderful YouTube channel, The Burning Archive. Clearly, the Chinese, Americans, Europeans and Asians don't mean the same thing by "multipolarity", I asked. "I think Rubio's statement is a variation on the old theme that America must fight against the Old World [Europe] to preserve its exception," Rich said. "In Rubio and the US government's mind, the belated acceptance of the 'reality' of the multipolar world means that the USA has all the power, but none of the responsibility. It has all the glory, but does none of the hard work of peace, international cooperation and paying for US wars. The other powers – allies and adversaries – do that. The performances in Europe – demanding Europe pay more for the US' endless wars, securing repayment from Ukraine of US war debts – confirm it." So, not a good thing when the US talks about a multipolar world? "If it was a real change, Rubio would have said, like India does, that foreign policy serves the national interest and the global good," Rich said. Interestingly, ever since Trump's return to power, India and China have drawn closer, and both are on the same page about "multipolarity". Even the Munich report reluctantly admits it: "China is the world's most prominent and powerful proponent of a multipolar order, portraying itself as an advocate for countries of the so-called Global South."

Trump's trade reset: Fairness or power?

Qamar Bashir



Countries that route merchandise, products, or goods under different classifications through third-party nations to evade tariffs or gain unfair trade advantages harm U.S. businesses and the economy by flooding the market with artificially cheaper imports. This practice undermines American manufacturers, reduces domestic job opportunities, and leads to trade imbalances that weaken U.S. industries. Countries that engage in these practices, such as China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mexico, and certain EU nations, would be most affected by this policy, as they often use intermediary nations to bypass trade regulations...

PRESIDENT Donald Trump, in his latest tweet, made it clear that he will impose tariffs on all countries without exception. To ensure fairness, he announced a Reciprocal Tariff, meaning the U.S. will charge the same tariff rates that other countries impose on American goods—no more, no less. He further declared that countries using the VAT system will face equal tariffs, and those routing merchandise, products, or goods through third-party nations to harm the U.S. economy will not be tolerated. Additionally, countries that provide subsidies to their industries, enforce non-monetary trade barriers, or restrict U.S. businesses from operating will face penalties. However, he welcomed foreign companies to shift their manufacturing units to the U.S. to avoid tariffs. Like Tariff, from the US perspective, VAT is equally punitive for the U.S. because it creates an uneven trade environment by imposing taxes on American imports while allowing VAT-based countries to rebate taxes on their exports, effectively subsidizing their goods. This disadvantages U.S. businesses by making their products more expensive abroad and incentivizing companies to relocate production to VAT-based nations. Countries using the VAT system that would be highly affected by an executive order addressing this issue include major trading partners like the European Union (Germany, France, Italy, Spain), China, India, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, and several others across Asia, Africa, and South America. Countries that provide subsidies to their industries, enforce non-monetary trade barriers, or restrict U.S. businesses from operating create an unfair trade environment that harms the American economy. These practices allow foreign companies to sell goods at artificially low prices, undercutting U.S. manufacturers and leading to job losses. Non-monetary barriers, such as excessive regulations and restrictions, prevent American businesses from competing fairly in international markets, reducing export opportunities and widening trade deficits. Additionally, blocking U.S. companies from operating in certain countries while allowing their own firms to access the U.S. market creates an imbalance that weakens domestic industries.

Countries that route merchandise, products, or goods under different classifications through third-party nations to evade tariffs or gain unfair trade advantages harm U.S. businesses and the economy by flooding the market with artificially cheaper imports. This practice undermines American manufacturers, reduces domestic job opportunities, and leads to trade imbalances that weaken U.S. industries. Countries that engage in these practices, such as China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mexico, and certain EU nations, would be most affected by this policy, as they often use intermediary nations to bypass trade regulations and maintain access to the U.S. market under preferential terms. Critics argue that President Trump's direct approach appears to be akin to a complete overhaul, as if the United States is a new nation with no past history. History shapes the tariffs, subsidies, and trade barriers—wars fought, debts unsettled, alliances forged, and nations rebuilt. Japan and Germany rose under American security after World War II, China leveraged U.S.-created trade rules to ascend, and Europe's high-tax, high-benefit model emerged from centuries of upheaval. True reciprocity in trade would require erasing this history, undoing past subsidies, military protections, and preferential access once granted to developing economies. But the critical question remains: when does protectionism stop being a ladder for growth and become a crutch that prevents self-sufficiency? At what point does a nation transition from "developing" to "fully developed"? Having said this, the fact remains that for years, the U.S. has been treated unfairly in trade, both by allies and rivals, and the push for reciprocity aims to restore fairness and prosperity. However, pure reciprocity assumes that all nations start from the same point, which is far from reality. Trade is not a balanced chess game, but rather a high-stakes poker match, where some players possess substantial reserves, while others face initial difficulties. The U.S. runs trade deficits not because of weakness, but because the dollar is the world's reserve currency, creating an endless demand for U.S. assets. This imbalance is not a flaw but a fundamental design of global trade. Surpluses are not inherently good, just as

deficits are not inherently bad. The real question is not just about lowering tariffs but whether the U.S. should rethink its entire economic strategy. Should it embrace economic nationalism, bringing industries back home at the cost of higher prices? Or should it leverage its unique advantages—dominance in global finance, technology, and energy—to shape the trade rules in ways no tariff ever could? Reciprocity is a starting point, not a final solution. History shows that trade fairness is not just about numbers; it's about vision, leverage, and understanding the broader game. It is though true that trade is complex, shaped by history, war, and economic policy—but it does also not change the fact that other countries impose higher tariffs on the U.S. than the U.S. does to them. Matching their rates isn't unfair; it's leveling the playing field. At what point do nations like Germany, Japan, and China stop receiving special treatment? WWII ended nearly 80 years ago, yet China, now the world's second-largest economy, still benefits from rules designed for struggling nations—that's not fairness, that's the U.S. getting played. What's truly unfair is expecting America to keep following different rules while other countries protect their industries. More than just tariffs, the real solution lies in reclaiming control of US manufacturing base and securing critical inputs. The new administration recognizes this challenge and is actively working to reshape manufacturing by offering incentives for companies to bring production back to the U.S. through infrastructure investments, targeted subsidies, and revamped trade policies. This effort isn't just about job creation—it's about securing America's economic independence in an increasingly fragmented and competitive world. While tariffs alone won't accomplish this, strategic domestic investment will. This is a long-term vision for true economic sovereignty, where American industries thrive within a self-sustaining, resilient economy, not relying on the goodwill of foreign competitors. The future of trade won't be about playing nice; it will be about securing national strength through self-reliance and smart policy.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

The impact of Covid-19 on Pakistan's education system

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Punjab experienced extended school closures, and studies indicate that 8% of adolescent girls and 21% of boys did not resume their education after reopening. Economic hardships compelled many boys to seek employment, while traditional societal norms increased household responsibilities for girls. Although 70% of students resumed studies...

THE COVID-19 pandemic posed extraordinary challenges to Pakistan, profoundly affecting numerous sectors, with education being among the hardest hit. The first confirmed case surfaced on February 26, 2020, and multiple waves of the virus followed over the ensuing years. By May 2023, Pakistan had reported approximately 1.58 million cases and over 30,000 fatalities, leading to widespread disruptions in daily life. As a containment measure, the government mandated nationwide school closures, severely impacting millions of children. These closures varied across provinces, cumulatively resulting in around 10.5 months of lost in-person learning, affecting nearly 40 million students. Gradual reopening, subject to stringent health protocols, was implemented in phases depending on the severity of the outbreak in each region. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and independent education surveys, approximately 22.8 million children were already out of school before the pandemic. This crisis exacerbated the situation, as many children—particularly from underprivileged backgrounds—failed to return to school post-pandemic. Punjab experienced extended school closures, and studies indicate that 8% of adolescent girls and 21% of boys did not resume their education after reopening. Economic hardships compelled many boys to seek employment, while traditional societal norms increased household responsibilities for girls. Although 70% of students resumed studies, nearly 1.8 million, especially in rural areas, remained out of school. The situation in Sindh was equally severe, with limited access to digital learning resources aggravating the crisis. Remote learning initiatives were introduced, but many students lacked internet access, devices, or an environment conducive to learning, leading to considerable learning losses. Over 2 million children in Sindh dropped out due to economic difficulties and their families' inability to afford schooling. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the educational impact was profound. Schools remained closed for prolonged periods, and students struggled with online education due to inadequate digital infrastructure. Reports suggested that many children, particularly in rural areas,

found it difficult to resume their studies post-pandemic. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa managed a relatively better return rate of around 75%, yet dropout rates in the tribal districts remained high due to inadequate digital learning facilities and displacement issues. The scenario in Balochistan was even more dire. The province already had the lowest literacy rates and poorest school attendance before COVID-19, and the pandemic exacerbated these challenges. High dropout rates were observed across all educational levels due to limited access to technology, economic hardships, and insufficient government support. Only about 60% of students resumed schooling, leaving a substantial gap in learning continuity. Several factors contributed to children not returning to school post-pandemic. The economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 forced many families to prioritize earning livelihoods over education. In lower-income households, children were compelled to contribute to family income. Girls were disproportionately affected, with many forced into early marriages or household duties. Additionally, the absence of proper reintegration strategies—such as financial assistance, counseling, and flexible academic calendars—led to permanent dropout rates among thousands of students. Another major issue was the reliance on online education, which left millions of students behind due to the digital divide. Statistics indicate that only 36% of households in Pakistan had internet access during the pandemic. At the governmental level, various measures were undertaken to mitigate the educational crisis. The Ministry of Education launched the TeleSchool initiative, offering televised lessons to students nationwide. Additionally, provincial governments introduced hybrid learning programs, with Punjab implementing the Taleem Ghar project and Sindh launching online classes through dedicated portals. However, these initiatives had limited success due to infrastructural challenges and low digital literacy among students and teachers. In response to increasing dropout rates, the government-initiated enrollment drives and provided financial incentives such as scholarships and stipends, particularly targeting girls and low-income families. Despite these efforts, the recovery process remains

slow, and a significant portion of students have yet to return to formal education. Education holds a revered status in Islam, recognized as a fundamental right and a crucial tool for personal and societal development. The Quran emphasizes the significance of knowledge in Surah Al-Alaq (96:1-5): "Read in the name of your Lord who created; He created man from a clinging form. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know." This verse underscores the divine command to acquire knowledge. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also stressed education's importance, stating, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah, 224). Furthermore, he emphasized continuous learning by declaring, "The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5027). Islam promotes both religious and worldly education for the betterment of society. To recover from the educational setbacks inflicted by COVID-19, a comprehensive strategy is imperative. First, enhancing school infrastructure and digital learning accessibility across all provinces is essential. The government must invest in expanding internet coverage, providing affordable digital devices, and training teachers in modern pedagogical techniques. A particular emphasis should be placed on girls' education by introducing community-based schools and financial aid programs to prevent further dropouts. Furthermore, policymakers should implement flexible learning models, including evening classes, bridge courses, and accelerated learning programs, to accommodate students who have fallen behind. Strengthening collaboration between the government, NGOs, and international organizations can further bridge the education gap through targeted interventions for the most affected areas. Pakistan's education sector has suffered immensely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but with sound policies and unwavering commitment, the country can recuperate from these setbacks. The focus must now be on ensuring that every child deprived of education during this period is reintegrated into the school system, safeguarding the future of millions of students and the nation as a whole.

Briefs

Pakistan seeks UN support in...

FROM PAGE 01 security, development and climate change. He underscored Pakistan's unwavering commitment to promoting international peace, and security as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2025-2026), while highlighting Pakistan's longstanding commitment to multilateralism and the UN Charter, including UN peacekeeping efforts. Dar also welcomed the initiative by the UN secretary-general to organise the Summit of the Future and expressed the hope that the Pact for the Future will be fully implemented, meeting the financing needs of the developing countries to implement the SDGs and climate goals.

'Why mily courts weren't...

FROM PAGE 01 Khosa argued that all legislation against Article 175 had been nullified in the past. Justice Mazhar questioned why military courts were not declared null and void in the 21st Amendment. Khosa replied that the amendment was not nullified due to wartime conditions and its two-year limit. During the hearing, Justice Hilali noted that Parliament approved the 26th Amendment but - Khosa - expect the courts to declare it null and void. Justice Mandokhal asked whether Khosa had voted against the constitutional amendment, to which the lawyer replied that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had not participated in the voting. Justice Mandokhal remarked that it was Khosa's duty to oppose it and play his role.

PM invites Bahraini investors...

FROM PAGE 01 "Parliamentary exchanges play a crucial role in deepening our relationship, and such initiatives will contribute to strengthening the already strong brotherly ties between Pakistan and Bahrain," Prime Minister Sharif stated. The prime minister encouraged Bahraini investors to take advantage of the business-friendly environment in Pakistan, stressing the country's vast potential in various sectors, including infrastructure, energy, manufacturing, and technology. He also acknowledged the significant contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in Bahrain, who play a vital role in different industries and services.

'Imran offered deal to overturn...

FROM PAGE 01 disqualification within three months," Raza said while speaking a private news channel. The politician's remarks came after a well-placed source told that the Imran Khan-founded 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. The source insisted that PTI was eager to restart the process and views Gandapur as the central figure, who could make it happen. So far, there is no indication that the other side is willing to engage.

PM, CJP discuss...

FROM PAGE 01 and timely delivery of justice in the country. During the meeting, the Prime Minister also discussed country's economic situation as well as economic and security challenges. Apprising the Chief Justice of the long-pending tax disputes in various courts, the Prime Minister requested the top judge to ensure timely decisions on these cases based on merit. The Chief Justice asked the Prime Minister for suggestions to improve the justice system. On this occasion, Chief Justice Yahya Afridi welcomed the prime minister's discussion on improving the justice system.

President Zardari, first lady Aseefa attend CT 2025 opener

Spectacular Air Show Opens ICC Champions Trophy 2025 In Karachi

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari and First Lady Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari attended the opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, marking the return of the prestigious tournament to Pakistan. The first game of the competition features the host nation and former champions Pakistan taking on New Zealand in Karachi's National Bank Stadium. Pakistan has won the toss and elected to bowl first, looking to capitalise on favourable conditions.

The event marks a significant moment for Pakistan, which is hosting the Champions Trophy for the first time since its inception. This year's tournament sees eight teams compete across three venues in Pakistan - Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi - as well as in Dubai, UAE, from February 19 to March 9. This is the first time since the 1996 ICC Cricket World Cup that Pakistan is hosting an ICC event, with the final of that tournament held at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. Ahead of the Champions Trophy, the three Pakistani venues - Gaddafi Stadium, National Stadium, and Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium - have undergone extensive upgrades, offering world-class facilities for players and spectators alike. The tournament features eight teams divided into two groups. Group A includes Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and New Zealand, while Group B comprises Afghanistan, Australia, England, and South Africa. Following their opener against New Zealand, Pakistan will face India on 23 February in Rawalpindi.



The group stage will see matches played across the four venues: Dubai, Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. The first semi-final will be held on 4 March in Dubai, with the second semi-final scheduled for 5 March at Gaddafi Stadium. If India does not qualify for the final, it will be held in Lahore; otherwise, the final will take place at Dubai International Cricket Stadium. Apart from their 2017 victory, Pakistan has reached the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy three times: in 2000, 2004, and 2009. Over 12,000 cops deployed for Champions Trophy The Punjab Police spokesperson said over 12,000 police officers and personnel will be deployed for security

duties in Lahore and Rawalpindi. The security team will include 18 senior officers, 54 DSPs, 135 inspectors, and 1,200 upper subordinates, along with 10,556 constables and more than 200 female police officers. In Lahore, over 8,000 officers and personnel will be assigned to secure the matches. This includes 12 senior officers, 39 DSPs, 86 inspectors, and 700 upper subordinates, while 6,673 constables and 129 female constables will perform security and checking duties. In Rawalpindi, more than 5,000 officers and personnel will be on duty. The security force will comprise six senior officers, 15 DSPs, 50 inspectors, 500 upper subordinates, 4,000 constables, and over 100 female personnel. According to the Deputy Inspector General Traffic, Sir Shah Suleman Road will remain open during match days, though several roads will be closed to heavy traffic. Special parking arrangements have been made for spectators. Parking areas will be available at the National Coaching Centre, the Expo Centre, and China Ground. Fans arriving from Karsaz will be directed to these parking zones via the flyover route. Heavy vehicles will be allowed to travel from Sohrab Goth to Nipa, Liaquatnagar No 10 to Hassan Square, and PP Chowranghi to University Road. However, access will be restricted from Karsaz to the stadium, Millennium to New Town, and Stadium Signal to Hassan Square.

Wahab recalls Pak 2017 Champions Trophy victory

'The 2017 Champions Trophy remains unforgettable for me and for Pakistan cricket,' says Wahab

LAHORE: Former Pakistan fast bowler Wahab Riaz opened up about the unforgettable 2017 ICC Champions Trophy victory, recalling his personal setback due to injury and the team's incredible resurgence to claim the title. Speaking to Geo News, Wahab reminisced about the tournament and expressed his disappointment over missing out on the majority of the campaign. "It was my misfortune that I suffered an ankle injury in the first match against India and had to sit out," said Wahab. The left-arm pacer emphasised that the team was highly motivated to achieve something special in the Champions Trophy, which played a crucial role in their historic success. "The 2017 Champions Trophy remains unforgettable for me and for Pakistan cricket. Although I was ruled out of the tournament due to a left ankle injury, I followed every single match closely. This victory holds immense significance in my career," he said. Reflecting on Pakistan's journey, the former chief selector highlighted the initial setback in the tournament. "We lost the first match against India, and at one stage, there were concerns about our qualification. But the team showed remarkable resilience, made a stunning comeback, and ultimately secured the title. The players were determined, remained motivated, and that's why they triumphed," he said. - DNA

Carlo Ancelotti dismisses City's underdogs claims

Real lead City 3-2 in Champions League playoff

WEB DESK

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti brushed aside Pep Guardiola's claim that Manchester City have a "one percent" chance of beating the Spanish side on Wednesday, saying that the defending European champions only hold a small advantage. Real came back to win 3-2 late on against City at the Etihad last week in the first leg of their Champions League playoff, but Ancelotti urged his side not to get ahead of themselves as they seek to seal a last 16 place in

front of their own fans. "Honestly, not even (Guardiola) believes what he said, but I'm going to ask him about it before the game anyway," the Italian joked in a press conference on Tuesday. "He doesn't think they have a one percent chance of advancing and neither do we think we are 99 percent favourites. We have a small advantage due to what we did at Manchester and we have to use it in our favour. "Learning to play with the advantage is a psychological issue and it is difficult to deal with it. I could come here and say that we have no advantage and will

play as if we were 0-0... but it's nonsense and nobody would believe me. "What you can control is the attitude of the team and ensure we play the same game as a week ago because it went well for us. But you can't forget that you have the advantage." After Real Madrid lodged a letter of complaint against LaLiga's referees after what they considered to be a number of unfair decisions, Carlo Ancelotti said the Champions League had fewer controversial calls, though he still had issues with VAR. "I do (feel calmer), the statistics speak for themselves. There is less contro-

versy and less intervention by the VAR (in the Champions League), which only intervenes when necessary," Ancelotti said. "In the Champions League, only the best referees from each country are assigned and the quality is very high in this respect. "I have doubts (about the VAR) because I think the VAR has taken too much responsibility away from the referee. It's a bit of a dangerous system. "The VAR has been introduced to avoid blatant and obvious mistakes, not for interventions that are football-related. Often the aim is to remove all the naturalness of football for the sake of an image."

Cop guarding polio team shot dead

FROM PAGE 01

last year, compared to six in 2023. Bajaur district shares a 52-kilometre border with Afghanistan. The start of the polio campaign had been delayed in the district for security reasons, after a rise in militant attacks in the area, said Waqas Rafiq, a senior police official. "Despite the attack, the campaign continues in all areas [of the district] except the site of the incident," he said. Polio mostly affects children under five and sometimes causes lifelong paralysis but can easily be prevented by the oral administration of a few drops of vaccine.

Consultations underway...

FROM PAGE 01

policies and provided suggestions for future growth, which were welcomed by the Prime Minister. In his address, Prime Minister Sharif emphasized that economic stability is a collective effort, not the work of any individual. He reiterated the government's commitment to sustainable economic development and highlighted efforts to promote trade in the region. The Prime Minister stated that the government aims to enhance the competitiveness of local industries in international markets, with a focus on boosting exports and creating jobs. He also mentioned initiatives to establish green data centers and improve telecommunication services, particularly in remote areas, to increase IT exports and the number of freelancers. The Prime Minister further emphasized the ongoing efforts to regulate digital currency in Pakistan and expressed the importance of turning today's discussions into actionable plans.

Dubai: Swiatek, Rybakina advance to quarters

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: Iga Swiatek came on strong in the second set of her last-16 clash with Dayana Yastremska at the Dubai Tennis Championships, triumphing 7-5 6-0 to reach the quarter-finals. Having crushed Victoria Azarenka 6-0 6-2 in Tuesday's rain-delayed second-round match, Swiatek initially faced a tougher challenge against her Ukrainian opponent on Wednesday. The 59-minute opening set featured four straight breaks between the sixth and ninth games, Yastremska twice getting the immediate break back after dropping serve. But Swiatek got the fifth break of the opener to love, and the second set was a different story as the world number two dominated with her consistent serving and powerful return game. The Pole converted her third match point when Yastremska's forehand fell long, wrapping up the second set in a quickfire 33 minutes. She will face either Mirra Andrejeva or Peyton Stearns - who has already eliminated Ons Jabeur and Qinwen Zheng - for a place in the last four. Meanwhile, Amid continued off-court uncertainty, Elena Rybakina is nonetheless dialed in on court at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships, saving a whopping six match points to defeat Paula Badosa,



4-6, 7-6 (8), 7-6 (2). The 2022 Wimbledon champion and No. 6 seed, who is the subject of new report in "The Athletic" detailing a "relationship of dependence" with suspended coach Stefano Vukov, repeatedly rallied from the brink of defeat to knock out the former world No. 2 in two hours and 49 minutes on a packed Court 1. Rybakina, who is officially coached by Davide Sanguinetti since splitting with Goran Ivanisevic following the Australian Open, has strenuously denied mistreatment at the hands of Vukov, who is presently barred from obtaining a WTA credential due to what tour CEO Portia Archer considers a "toxic" dynamic between coach and pupil stemming from an investigation that began shortly after their split at the 2024 US Open.

Zimbabwe thump Ireland in third ODI to clinch series

Curran's maiden century earns him the Player of the Match Award

HARARE: A disciplined bowling performance, followed by Ben Curran's unbeaten century, powered Zimbabwe to thump Ireland by nine wickets and win the three-match ODI series 2-1 at the Harare Sports Club here on Tuesday. Put into bat first, Ireland could accumulate 240/6 in their allotted 50 overs, despite half-centuries from Andy Balbirnie, Lorcan Tucker and Harry Tector. The visitors got off to a shaky start to their innings as they lost their skipper Paul Stirling (nine) and top-order batter Curtis Campher (11) early with just 42 runs on the board in 13.3 overs. Following the slump, Balbirnie joined forces with Tector and launched recovery. The duo added an important 86 runs for the third wicket until the opener fell victim to Wellington Masakadza in the 33rd over. Balbirnie remained the top-scorer for Ireland with an anchoring 64 off 99 deliveries with the help of four fours and a six. Tector was then involved in a brief 31-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Tucker and walked back in the 39th over after scoring an 84-ball 51, laced with three fours and a six. The wicketkeeper batter then oversaw Ireland's batting expedition until the final over and returned after scoring 61 off 54 balls, featuring seven boundaries. - Agencies

Spectacular fly-past by Pakistan Air Force at the opening match of Champions Trophy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a powerful demonstration of national pride and unwavering commitment, Pakistan Air Force's aerial display at the opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy served as a resounding tribute to the entire Pakistani nation. The bravehearts of PAF extended their salute to the entire nation, painting the skies with the vibrant colors of the green crescent flag. The Sherdils team also showcased their exceptional professional prowess through the execution of Spirit Pass & Shaheen

Break maneuver. JF-17 Thunder Block-III and F-16 Fighting Falcons were met with enthusiastic appreciation from the assembled spectators. The JF-17 Thunder aircraft, a symbol of Pakistani ingenuity and a testament to its proven combat capabilities in various international exercises, was the highlight of the flypast. The inclusion of the Pride of Pakistan, JF-17 Thunder aircraft, in the air forces of numerous friendly countries is a testament to its combat capabilities. Pakistan Air Force's flypast at the opening match of the ICC Champions Trophy exemplifies its steadfast dedication to standing shoulder to shoulder with the nation at all times.



NZ crush Pakistan by 60 runs

FROM PAGE 01

slipped to 153/6 in 34 overs. Babar scored a cautious 64 off 90 deliveries, smashing six fours and a six. Coming out to bat at number seven, Khushdil Shah went after the New Zealand bowlers, hitting 10 fours and a six on his way to a brisk 49-ball 69. He was eventually dismissed in the 44th over by Will O'Rourke, who put New Zealand just two wickets within the victory. Pakistan's tailenders Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah offered some resistance down the order but their efforts were not enough to lead their side to victory. Mitchell Santner and O'Rourke took three wickets each for New Zealand, followed by Matt Henry, who claimed two. Put into bat first, the Blackcaps registered 320/5 on the board in their allotted 50 overs, thanks to a match-defining fourth-wicket partnership between Young and Latham.

Briefs

PSX stays bullish, gains 253 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 253.96 points, a positive change of 0.22 percent, closing at 113,342.44 points as compared to 113,088.48 points on the last trading day. A total of 667,719,653 shares were traded during the day as compared to 545,005,593 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs25.734 billion against Rs20.741 billion on the last trading day. As many as 451 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 236 of them recorded gains and 146 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 69 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 180,890,168 shares at Rs.4.88 per share, Bank of Punjab with 53,761,800 shares at Rs.12.94 per share and Fauji Cement with 38,112,842 shares at Rs.40.55 per share.—APP

Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs279.46 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.36. 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 26 paise to close at Rs292.08 against the last day's closing of Rs292.34, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen gained 01 paise and closed at Rs1.84, whereas an increase of 21 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs352.67 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs352.46. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 03 paise each to close at Rs 76.08 and Rs 74.51, respectively.—APP

Gold up by Rs.3,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.3,800 and was sold all time high at Rs 308,000 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs 304,200 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 3,258 to Rs 264,060 from Rs 260,802 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs.2,986 to Rs 242,063 from Rs 239,077. The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.90 to Rs.3,440 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.77 to Rs.2,949. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$34 to \$2,944 from \$2,910 whereas the prices of silver in international market increased by Rs.0.51 to \$32.96, the Association reported.—APP

easypaisa digital making it happen with 'easy wala bank'

ISLAMABAD: Banking as we know has changed forever. Gone are the days of long queues, endless paperwork, and rigid banking hours. In a world where everything is just a tap away, easypaisa digital bank is redefining convenience with its bold new campaign: 'easy wala bank' because banking should be as easy as everything else in life. Pakistan has officially entered a new era of financial accessibility with easypaisa digital bank, the country's first incumbent digital retail bank, now commercially approved by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) under its Licensing and Regulatory Framework for Digital Banks. This is more than just another step in digital transformation.—APP

Philippine delegation tours ME for trade, agriculture deals

"The event is expected to influence the future direction of Philippine exports by identifying emerging opportunities in the Middle Eastern market and encouraging more Philippine businesses to explore export ventures in the region

MANILA: In an effort to strengthen the Philippines' trade presence in the Middle East, a government-led business mission is touring Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar and the UAE to explore new market opportunities for the country's agricultural and non-food products. Running from Feb. 7-21, the mission, which includes 26 major Philippine exporters, is organized by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture. The mission began with a visit to Doha, followed by Amman and Riyadh, and is now concluding its final leg in Dubai. "The DTI and DA partnership seeks to enhance the global competitiveness of Philippine agribusiness by streamlining value chains, promoting value-added processing and ensuring compliance with international standards. This approach is designed to help exporters navigate regulatory requirements and overcome market

entry challenges in the Middle East especially, in Saudi Arabia," Raymond Balatbat, the Philippine ambassador to Riyadh, told Arab News. "The mission aims to expand market access and promote Philippine agricultural and fisheries exports, as well as non-food products, particularly personal care products. Given the identified sectors, which have high export potential in the Middle East, the DTI partnered with the Philippine Embassies in Doha, Amman, Riyadh and the Philippine Consulate General in Dubai as well as local chambers of commerce in setting up the business matching activities. The exporters have scheduled meetings with potential local buyers and distributors in each country." In Saudi Arabia, the Philippine delegation engaged in multiple business matching missions, including meetings with the Riyadh Chamber of

Commerce and retail giants such as Lulu, Manuel Supermarket and Abdullah Al-Othaim Markets. The mission also made progress in Amman, leading to agreements with Jordanian distributors, especially in the sectors of food and agribusiness, including halal-certified products, processed food and beverages, personal care and cosmetics. "The matching process was conducted through pre-arranged business-to-business meetings, supermarket scanning and sales calls," said Angeli Payumo, consul and head of the political and economic section of the Philippine Embassy in Amman. "On Feb. 10, the 21 representatives of the 12 Philippine exporters visited five of the leading supermarkets in Jordan to gain an in-depth understanding of the Jordanian market. On Feb. 11, a B2B matching event was held at the Amman Chamber of

Commerce." During the Amman visit, the Philippine delegation held consultations with the Jordan Food and Drug Administration, and the Ministry of Agriculture on import regulations, halal certification and efforts to ease trade barriers. In the UAE, the mission is focused on meetings in Dubai to explore partnerships in trade and distribution. "Market scanning activities in Dubai have provided insights into consumer preferences and buying behavior, highlighting a strong demand for high-quality halal-certified food products, healthy and organic alternatives, and convenience-driven packaged goods," the DTI's Export Marketing Bureau said in a statement to Arab News. "The preference for sustainable and ethically sourced products is also growing. These findings will guide Philippine exporters in refining their offerings and

marketing strategies to better cater to Middle Eastern consumers." The delegation is also taking part in the 2025 edition of Gulfood – one of the Gulf region's biggest food exhibitions, which takes place in Dubai from Feb. 17-21. This year's focus of Philippine exhibitors is on premium food products and brand recognition activities. "From Gulfood 2025, we expect that we will be able to secure high-value trade deals, expand market access for Philippine exporters, and strengthen relationships with regional distributors and retailers," the Export Marketing Bureau said. "The event is expected to influence the future direction of Philippine exports by identifying emerging opportunities in the Middle Eastern market and encouraging more Philippine businesses to explore export ventures in the region.—Agencies

Envoy Dr Jemal presents his credentials to Tajikistan's President

DNA

DUSHANBE: Dr. Jemal Bekker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Designated to the Republic of Tajikistan with Residence in Islamabad formally presented his credentials to H.E. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan here on Wednesday. Ambassador Dr. Jemal Bekker, who is also a non-resident Ambassador of the FDR Ethiopia to Turkmenistan and the Kyrgyz Republic with residence in Islamabad, presented the credentials at the Palace of Nation, Dushanbe during a formal credentials presentation ceremony. Addressing the Credential Presentation Ceremony, H.E. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, conveyed his good wishes for the leaders and people of the FDR Ethiopia. The President reaffirmed his commitment



to establish a strong bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation with the FDR Ethiopia in the areas of business, trade, education, health, science and technology, aviation, energy, security and climate change. He assured the Ambassador of all possible support of his country to further advancing the bilateral,

regional and multilateral cooperation with the FDR Ethiopia. The President said the FDR Ethiopia is a power house of Africa, contributing immensely to integrate the region by ensuring peace, security and sustainable development in the African continent. Congratulating Ambassador Dr.

Jemal Bekker on his appointment to Tajikistan, the President said this would write a new chapter in the bilateral relations of the two countries. H. E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal Bekker is currently on a working visit to Dushanbe to advance the bilateral relations between the two sisterly nations.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians flee West Bank refugee camps

JERUSALEM: Tens of thousands of Palestinians living in refugee camps in the occupied West Bank have left their homes as a weeks-long Israeli offensive has demolished houses and torn up vital infrastructure in the heavily built up townships, Palestinian authorities said. Israeli forces began their operation in the refugee camp in the northern West Bank city of Jenin on Jan. 21, deploying hundreds of troops and bulldozers that demolished houses and dug up roads, driving almost all of the camp's residents out. "We don't know what's going on in the camp but there is continuous demolition and roads being dug up," said Mohammed Al-Sabbagh, head of the Jenin camp services committee. The operation, which Israel says is aimed at thwarting Iranian-backed militant groups in the West Bank, has since been extended to other camps, notably the Tulkarm refugee camp and the nearby Nur Shams camp, both of which have also been devastated. The camps, built for descendants of Palestinian refugees who fled or were driven from their homes in the 1948 war around the creation of the state of Israel, have long been major centers for armed militant groups. They have been raided repeatedly by the Israeli military but the current operation, which began as a ceasefire was agreed in Gaza, has been on an unusually large scale. According to figures from the Palestinian Authority, around 17,000 people have now left Jenin refugee camp, leaving the site almost completely deserted, while in Nur Shams 6,000 people, or about two thirds of the total, have left, with another 10,000 leaving from Tulkarm camp. "The ones who are left are trapped," said Nihad Al-Shawish, head of the Nur Shams camp services committee. "The Civil Defense, the Red Crescent and the Palestinian security forces brought them some food yesterday but the army is still bulldozing and destroying the camp.—APP

Bangladesh clashes leave nearly 150 students injured

DHAKA: More than 150 students have been injured in Bangladesh during clashes at a university campus, a sign of serious discord between groups instrumental in fomenting a national revolution last year. Tuesday afternoon's clashes began after the youth wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) sought to recruit students at the Khulna University of Engineering and Technology in the country's southwest. That sparked a confrontation with campus members of Students Against Discrimination, a protest group that led the uprising that ousted autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina last August. At least 50 people were taken for treatment after the skirmish, Khulna police officer Kabir Hossain told AFP. "The situation is now under control, and an extra contingent of police has been deployed," he added. Communications student Jahidur Rahman told AFP that those hospitalized had injuries from thrown bricks and "sharp weapons," and that around 100 others had suffered minor injuries. Footage of the violence showing rival groups wielding scythes and machetes, along with injured students being carted to hospital for treatment, was widely shared on Facebook.—APP

3rd Sundar Industrial Expo 2025 opens

LAHORE: Punjab Industrial Estates Development and Management Company (PIEDMC) Chairman Javed Iqbal inaugurated the 3rd Sundar Industrial Expo 2025 here on Wednesday. More than 300 national and multinational companies are presenting their products at the Sundar Industrial Expo. The event was also attended by Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Mian Abuzar Shad, NAB DG Muhammad Ahtaram Dar, Syed Nabeel Hashmi, Mohsin Syed, Shehzad Azam Khan, Hafiz Saleem Minhas, Sajid Mian Muhammad Nauman and a large number of industrialists. PIEDMC Chairman and other dignitaries planted saplings under the green estate policy; visited different stalls; and encouraged the industrialists who set up the stalls. On this occasion, the Chairman Javed Iqbal said that companies displaying their products at stalls in the expo would not only get an opportunity to promote their business but also get help in increasing their business networking. He said that next year this expo would be organized according to international standards, while another similar expo would be organized in Quaid-i-Azam Industrial Estate Kot Lakhpat and Multan Industrial Estate.—APP

Israel army says charges five soldiers for abusing Palestinian detainee

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military said Wednesday it had filed charges against five reservist soldiers for abusing a Palestinian detainee in July last year. "Today, the military prosecution has filed an indictment against five reservist soldiers under the charges of causing severe injury and abuse under aggravating circumstances... against a security detainee held in the Sde Teiman detention facility," it said in a statement, referring to a site used to hold Gazans since the war began. "The indictment charges the accused with acting against the detainee with severe violence, including stabbing the detainee's bottom with a sharp object, which had penetrated near the detainee's rectum," the statement said. It added "the acts of violence have caused severe physical injury to the detainee, including cracked ribs, a punctured lung and an inner rectal tear." It said the incident took place on July 5, 2024, following an instruction to conduct a search of the detainee during which he was "blindfolded, and cuffed at the hands and ankles.—APP

Macron to host new emergency talks on Ukraine

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron was set on Wednesday to host a new meeting on Ukraine in a bid to coordinate a European response to what he called an "existential threat" from Russia amid a shock policy shift in Washington. US president Donald Trump has stunned the European Union by indicating he is ready to resume diplomacy with President Vladimir Putin after three years of Russia's war against Ukraine and discuss the fate of the pro-Western country over the heads of not only Europe but also Kyiv. On Monday, Macron convened key European leaders as well as NATO and EU chiefs for emergency talks to agree a coordinated response to Washington's shock policy shift on Russia. Several smaller European countries including Romania and the Czech Republic were reportedly aghast at not being invited despite being strong supporters of Ukraine, so Macron said he would convene a new meeting Wednesday. In an interview with French regional newspapers on Tuesday, he said he planned to meet "with several European and non-European states." The talks were set to take place Wednesday afternoon, with most participants taking part by video link, according to the Elysee. "Russia poses an existential threat to Europeans," Macron said.—DNA

EU eyes stricter food import rules in agriculture policy review

BRUSSELS: The EU plans to crackdown on food imports that do not meet its standards as part of an agricultural policy review to be published Wednesday that looks to appease disgruntled farmers amid global trade tensions. The European Commission is due to unveil a new blueprint for a sector that despite gobbling up a third of the bloc's budget has long resented Brussels's liberal approach to trade. Months of protests last year saw farmers irked at regulatory burdens, squeezed revenues and what they see as unfair competition from less-regulated overseas rivals, hurling eggs, spraying manure and blocking the Belgian capital's streets. Following consultations with farming lobby groups and environmental NGOs, the "Vision for Agriculture and Food" promises to address some of those concerns. To ensure that the agricultural sector is not "put at a competitive disadvantage," the commission will pursue "a stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products," according to a draft of the text seen by AFP. In particular, Brussels will see to it that "the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health and environmental reasons" are not allowed back in "through imported products." The draft does not specify a timeline for that or what products or countries could be affected. "The first mission of this vision is to reduce tensions and calm all parties," said Luc Vernet of Farm Europe, a think tank, noting the text was "extremely cautious." The prospect of a potential ban on some imports could ruffle feathers abroad against the backdrop of a looming trade conflict. The Financial Times reported this week US crops such as soybean could be targeted, after President Donald Trump unveiled duties that could hit European exports. European farmers have also been uneasy at a trade deal with Latin America's Mercosur the commission announced in December. The draft document also vows to reform the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP), cutting red tape and better targeting mammoth subsidies toward farmers "who need it most." This suggests Brussels will move away from the current system, which calculates financial aid based on the size of the farms, favoring large landowners. "This is a big deal," said Celia Nyssens-James of the European Environment Bureau, an umbrella group of activists, noting that the lion's share of money is now going to a minority of farmers who don't "necessarily need it." "It's a paradigm shift," she said. The EU subsidizes farming to make sure enough food is produced at affordable prices, and farmers are rewarded for taking care of nature. Those subsidies are massive and prized by farming states, most notably France, Ireland and eastern European nations, where farmers have a strong political influence. Some 387 billion euros (\$460 million) was earmarked for agriculture in the EU's budget for 2021 to 2027. Negotiations on the next instalment of the CAP for 2028-2034 are set to be one of the most sensitive subjects during EU chief Ursula von der Leyen's second term in office, which began in December.—Agencies

Multivector diplomacy termed critical for Pakistan to navigate evolving global order

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the global order shifts, Pakistan must adopt a pragmatic, multivector foreign policy to balance regional and global relationships while enhancing its international standing. This approach, coupled with internal balance, enables mutually beneficial cooperation with powers like Russia and leverages opportunities while addressing challenges. This, however, also reinforces the need for a more inclusive global order that accommodates emerging powers and diverse regional interests. This was discussed during a hybrid seminar, "The Evolving Pakistan-Russia Relationship in a Changing Global Order," at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The seminar was held as part of the 1st Pakistani-Russian International Conference, jointly organized by the Institute of International Relations, Kazan Federal University, Russia, and the Department of International Relations, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), Karachi. The session,

chaired by Prof Dr Fakhru-Allah, former director Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman, IPS, Prof Dr Adam Saud, dean Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad, Brig (r) Tughral Yamin, former associate dean, Centre of International Peace and Stability, NUST, Dr Saira Nawaz Abbasi, senior assistant professor, Bahria University, Is-

lamabad, and Taimur Fahad Khan, research associate, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad. In his keynote address, Dr Adam Saud noted that the global transition of power and strategic alignments is leading the world toward multipolarity. This transition unfolds various avenues of cooperation for countries to advance their national interests and marks the importance of maintaining balanced relationships with regional and global powers. However, this can only be pursued through a

multivector foreign policy for Pakistan. He stressed the need for Pakistan to prioritize economic and political stability as a foundation for sustained foreign engagements under this approach. In this context, Russia presents viable opportunities to build on defense cooperation, energy partnerships like the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline and discounted Russian crude oil imports, trade, technology, infrastructure, and agriculture collaborations, and potential trilateral projects with China, such as the Trans-Afghan Railway and North-South Transport Corridor. However, with this evolving landscape, several challenges persist, including Russia's ties with India, sanctions affecting joint projects, low bilateral trade, limited people-to-people connectivity, terrorism, energy security, and geopolitical realignments. Brig (r) Tughral Yamin noted that disrupted supply chains, higher prices of commodities like wheat, edible oil, and fuel, halted defense contracts, and increased geopolitical pressures after the Russia-Ukraine War also adversely affected Pakistan's economic ties with Ukraine. However,

he noted that Pakistan adopted a pragmatic approach, in line with its broader multivector foreign policy, by diversifying its imports, shifting to Russia and Kazakhstan for wheat supplies, and recalibrating its diplomatic strategy to balance ties with Russia and Ukraine. This has enabled it to navigate challenges while safeguarding economic and strategic interests. Endorsing this, Dr Saira Nawaz emphasized that Pakistan and Russia can also address shared challenges by leveraging international forums like the SCO, BRICS, and UN. This would strengthen bilateral ties, enhance strategic autonomy, diversify alliances, and counterbalance Western influence while advancing shared goals. While supporting this viewpoint, Taimur Fahad stressed that the priority must be addressing domestic challenges to strengthen Pakistan's global positioning. To maximize these opportunities, internal balance manifested by institutional strength, rule of law, economic resilience, social cohesion, human development, and infrastructure development are crucial for Pakistan.



Briefs

Iran, Qatar opening new avenues for coop

TEHRAN: President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran says Tehran and Doha have made significant decisions to deepen relations and open new avenues for cooperation. Speaking at a press conference alongside Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani after their meeting in Tehran, Pezeshkian said they discussed bilateral issues to secure the interests of both countries.

The Qatari emir underscored the necessity of creating new opportunities for cooperation, the Iranian president said. Pezeshkian said one of Iran's key policies is to develop comprehensive relations with neighboring and regional countries. "Iran believes regional countries can, based on good neighborliness, mutual respect, and constructive interaction, take steps towards maintaining regional stability and security and lay the groundwork for creating a joint cooperation framework."

The president said they also discussed the situation in Syria, and that he emphasized the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria and the participation of all its people in determining their fate. Pezeshkian hailed Qatar's mediation efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of oppressed Palestinian abductees.

The Iranian president put a premium on the need for more coherent measures by Islamic countries to reduce the suffering and pain of the people of Gaza. "We believe that all nations and governments in the region and the world should make efforts based on divine and human values to defend the oppressed people of Palestine, notably Gaza." - Agencies

Tarbela Dam reaching dead level

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Amid prolonged drought, Tarbela dam is quickly reaching dead level. Besides Tarbela Dam, Simli and Khanpur Dams have also reached dead level due to lack of rains in the country.

The current storage of water in Tarbela Dam is 9.92 million that only 16 percent of the water is usable. Water discharge in Tarbela Dam is 45000 cusecs while inflow is 13800 cusecs.

Sources said if the water discharge remains the same then Tarbela Dam will dry out within 15 days. Water supply from Khanpur Dam to Islamabad and Rawalpindi has also been stopped because of sanitation drive.

IHC summons jail superintendent

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued a summons for the Adiala Jail Superintendent on February 27 in response to a contempt of court petition regarding the denial of a meeting between PTI founder and Bushra Bibi. The case was heard by Acting Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar, following a petition filed by PTI founder's lawyer, Faisal Fareed Chaudhry. During the hearing, Faisal Fareed argued that despite the court's previous orders, the jail authorities have not allowed a meeting between the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi. He pointed out that on January 28, the jail superintendent assured the court that the meeting would be arranged, but this commitment was never fulfilled. The court questioned the state counsel on why its orders were not implemented and directed the law officer to ensure compliance. The hearing has been adjourned until February 27, with the Adiala Jail Superintendent ordered to appear in court to explain the matter.

Pakistan, UK strengthen military ties amid geo political shifts

On the inaugural day of his visit, General Syed Asim Munir was accorded a warm and dignified welcome, including a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the historic Royal Horse Guards Parade Ground

NEWS DESK

LONDON: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), is on an official visit to the United Kingdom to participate in the 7th Regional Stabilization

Conference at the esteemed Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where he will deliver the keynote address on "The Emerging World Order and Pakistan's Future Outlook." The Stabilization Conference serves as the premier platform for Army-to-Army dialogue between Pakistan and the United King-

dom, held annually to foster collaboration. The event brings together a balanced representation of policymakers, both civil and military, as well as members of prominent think tanks from both nations. This year's conference holds particular significance in light of the rapidly evolving geopolitical land-

scape, providing an invaluable opportunity to exchange perspectives and explore pathways for enhanced bilateral cooperation. On the inaugural day of his visit, General Syed Asim Munir was accorded a warm and dignified welcome, including a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the historic Royal Horse Guards Parade Ground, presented by an impeccably turned-out contingent. During his visit, the COAS will engage with key members of the UK's civil and military leadership to discuss matters of mutual interest. His engagements will include meetings with MrAdm Toney Radikon, Chief of Defence Staff UK, General Sir Roland Walker, Chief of the General Staff of the British Army, and Mr. Jonathan Nicholas Powell, the UK National Security Advisor. Furthermore, the COAS will hold discussions with Ms. Yvette Cooper, Home Secretary, to address shared challenges and underscore the importance of fostering deeper collaboration.

Pakistan and the United Kingdom share a long-standing relationship rooted in strong diplomatic, economic, and security ties. Over the years, the two countries' militaries have maintained robust cooperation, particularly in the domains of counterterrorism and professional training. As part of his itinerary, COAS will also visit prominent units of the British Army, including the Land Warfare Centre and the 1st Strike Brigade, where he will receive briefings on the UK Army's modernization initiatives and operational strategies. The visit underscores the enduring partnership between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, reaffirming their shared commitment to regional stability and global peace.



Hamas offers all captives for 'permanent ceasefire'

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem outlined the group's vision for the second phase of a ceasefire deal

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: Hamas has proposed the full release of all captives held in Gaza in exchange for a permanent ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the enclave. In a statement issued on Wednesday, Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem outlined the group's vision for the second phase of a ceasefire deal, which includes the proposed exchange of prisoners. "We are ready for a second phase in which the prisoners will be exchanged in one go, with the criterion of reaching an agreement that leads to a permanent ceasefire and a complete withdrawal from the Strip," Qassem said. Hamas also rejected Israel's demand for its disarmament and removal from Gaza, calling it "a ridiculous psychological war." Qassem stressed that the withdrawal or disarmament of Hamas was unacceptable.

The group has also increased the number of captives to be released in the upcoming swap, from three to six, in an effort to accelerate the implementation of phase two of the ceasefire deal. This decision follows a request from mediators and aims to demonstrate Hamas' commitment to fulfilling the terms of the agreement. The proposal comes after US President Donald Trump criticised the phased weekly release of captives taken from Israel, and amid calls from families of those held in Gaza for the immediate release of all prisoners. Despite the continued blockade, which has prevented the entry of essential supplies, including mobile homes and construction equipment, Hamas has insisted on the implementation of agreed terms, including the entry of aid. Last week, Hamas threatened to delay the release of prisoners due to Israel's failure to honour certain aspects of the agreement, such as the delivery of reconstruction materials.

Zelensky accuses Trump of falling for Russian 'disinformation'

FOREIGN DESK

KIEV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday accused Donald Trump of succumbing to Russian "disinformation", deepening a rift between Kyiv and the new US administration. Speaking to reporters at a press conference on Tuesday, Trump echoed many of Russia's talking points on the three-year war in Ukraine, blaming Kyiv for having "started" the fighting and suggesting Zelensky was hugely unpopular. Trump claimed his Ukrainian counterpart had a minimal approval rating in his country - despite polls showing otherwise. Zelensky hit back, saying that "unfortunately, President Trump, for whom we have great respect as leader of the American people... lives in this disinformation space." Zelensky's comments highlighted a growing rift between Ukraine and the Trump administration, which sent officials to meet with Russian negotiators on Tuesday in a high-level meeting in Saudi Arabia that excluded Kyiv. "I believe that the United States helped Putin to break out of years of isolation," the Ukrainian leader added, in some

of his sharpest criticism yet of the new US administration. Russia has revelled in Trump's remarks, praising him on Wednesday as the "only Western leader" who understood that "dragging Ukraine into NATO" was a cause of the conflict. "He is a completely independent politician," Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency on Wednesday. Trump's special envoy for Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, arrived in the Ukrainian capital on Wednesday morning in what he said was a mission to "sit and listen" to Kyiv's concerns, after Ukraine chided the US for not being included in the Russian talks. Trump has upended US foreign policy since taking office last month, making statements that have alarmed even Washington's closest allies. His diplomatic overtures towards the Kremlin have alarmed Ukraine, which fears it will be forced to make massive concessions to end the fighting. In his press conference on Tuesday, Trump suggested that one such concession would be to hold new elections in Ukraine, one of Moscow's demands for a peace deal. "It's been a long time since we've had an election," said Trump. "That's not a Russian thing, that's something coming from me, from other countries."

CM KP blames 'int'l powers' for fueling violence in Kurram

KP chief minister fears forces beyond borders hell-bent on using Kurram conflicts to set entire Pakistan on fire

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has said that hostile international powers are fuelling violence in the restive Kurram region in a bid to foment unrest across the country. "Land disputes can occur anywhere, but the scale of the conflict in Kurram demands deeper attention," the firebrand CM said on Wednesday, voicing fears that non-state actors were hell-bent on "using these sparks to set entire Pakistan on fire." Kurram has been wracked by violence for decades, over 150 people have been killed in a fresh round of fighting which started in November last year when two separate convoys travelling under police protection were ambushed, leaving at least 40 people dead. In the latest incident, a Kurram-bound convoy of trucks carrying food and supplies, escorted by security forces through the Lower Kurram tribal district, came under attack, leaving at least seven dead. The deceased included five security personnel, a truck driver, and a passerby, according to official sources, who added that two armed attackers were also killed in the ensuing gun battle. Over 20 individuals sustained injuries, including

five security personnel and five drivers. The 64-truck convoy heading to Parachinar came under attack at multiple locations, including Mandori, Ochat, Charkhel, and Bagan. The CM said that despite all the odds, the government was committed to addressing the longstanding issues in Kurram and assuring concrete measures to maintain peace in the region. "Such [land-related] conflicts are common, but do entire villages rise up against each other?" he questioned, highlighting the gravity of the situation and suggesting that there was more to it than what meets the eye. Implying the involvement of external forces in the tense district, the CM said that the kind of weaponry being supplied to and used by groups fighting in Kurram was a testament to such fears. "The KP government is actively working to resolve the matter and has already allocated Rs2 billion for the installation of CCTV cameras to improve security," the CM said adding, "We are also setting up security posts along key roads to prevent targeted attacks," he added. Gandapur also vowed strict action against the miscreants, stating that there would be no leniency for elements trying to destabilise the region. "A clear message has been sent - anyone spreading terror will not be spared and will face justice," he asserted. He further said that head money had been placed on those fuelling unrest. "We will not back down from our responsibility to ensure lasting peace," Gandapur affirmed. Prolonged road closures and the complete suspension of movement to and from Kurram due to the unrest had cut the district off from the outside world, leading to a severe shortage of food and medicine, which reportedly resulted in additional deaths.

Pak, KSA joint naval exercise concludes

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A joint exercise between Pakistan Navy and Royal Naval Forces, Affa Al Sahel, concluded in Karachi. The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Commander Coast Rear Admiral Faisal Amin along with top officials of both naval forces witnessed the final test exercise. The training exercises included RPG firing, machine gun firing, close quarters combat, practical rappelling, hostage rescue, EOD drills, mission planning, area clearance using modern techniques and others. The aim of this joint exercise was to enhance coordination and strategic skills between the two navies. This exercise will contribute to improving mutual capabilities and coordination to tackle maritime security challenges.

FIA arrests visa consultant after complaint

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Circle in Karachi has arrested a suspect involved in creating fraudulent documents. The arrested individual has been identified as Mohammad Mushtaq Rajput, who was apprehended during a raid in Karachi. The action was taken after a complaint was lodged by the US Consulate in Karachi, which reported that the suspect had been deceiving citizens by issuing fake appointment letters. According to the initial investigation, Rajput issued a fake appointment letter to a citizen while operating a visa consultancy business under the name "Mansoor Consultants". The investigation revealed that Rajput had charged the victim PKR 200,000 in exchange for the fake documents. When the victim contacted the concerned authorities to verify the appointment, the forgery was exposed.

Following this, the US authorities filed a written complaint, prompting the FIA to take immediate action. The FIA has arrested Mohammad Mushtaq Rajput and initiated an inquiry into the matter. The investigation is ongoing, and the authorities are working to uncover the full extent of the fraudulent activities.

Tribal journalist begging for survival due to threats

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Mehrab Afridi a young journalist from tribal district Khyber is begging for survival since the murder of his colleague Khalil Jibrán Presidet Landi Kotal Press Club who was mysteriously shot dead by unknown militants on June 18th 2024 last. Both were receipts of threats and warning from militants who are active in the region from last two decades. Talking to this scribe from an unknown location Mehrab Afridi recalled that soon after mysterious death of his colleague Khalil Jibrán, he in according to police high ups had left home and shifted to Islamabad along with family. However, after couple of months, he left with no option to leave the federal capital when some mysterious persons, boarding on tented gassaid vehicles frequently chasing him and his children. Mehrab said that after Islamabad he decided to shift to Lahore, Islamabad or any other place but was uncertain about his teenager children. Finally, he decided to timely disintegrate from the family. Now he living in an unknown location and similar is the position of his family members. In response to a question, Mehrabsaid that he didn't contacted Human Rights Commission of Pakistan or any other international Human Rights protection for any support and protection. He, however, confirmed getting help from Islamabad based organization claiming helping needy journalists.

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