



Islamabad POST

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Zelensky ready to resign in exchange for Ukraine Nato bid

Detailed News On Page-08

Resistance will endure in new phase: Qassem

Detailed News On Page-07



Jack Draper withdraws from DDFTC

Detailed News On Page-06



TTAP invites GDA to join alliance

Opp unites for alliance against govt

TTAP, GDA decide to form committees to achieve common agenda

NAZIR SIYAL / DNA

KARACHI: Amid a prospective anti-government movement by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the opposition parties have agreed to work together for the supremacy of the Constitution and independence of the judiciary and parliament in the country. The agreement came during the initial formal contact between the Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) leaders and the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA). During their meeting with Pir Sahab Pagara, the TTP delegation – comprising Mahmood Khan Achakzai, PTI's Asad Qaiser, Salman Akram Raja, Sardar Lateef Khosa, Nasir Sheerazi, Haleem Adil Sheikh, Hamid Raza, Sajid Tareen and others – extended an invitation the GDA to join their multi-party alliance. Meanwhile, the GDA leaders part of the meeting included Pir Sadaruddin Shah Rashdi, Dr Safdar Abbasi, Dr Fahmida Mirza, Liaquat Jatoi, Syed Zain Shah, Sardar Abdul Rahim, Dr Zulfiqar Mirza, Syed Muhammad Rashid Shah, Irfanullah Khan Marwat and others. The meeting came after opposition parties decided to strengthen their anti-government alliance and announced a three-day visit to Sindh. The contact drive comes against the backdrop of PTI founder Imran Khan's directives to the party with instructions to expedite "establishing contact with other opposition parties for protests after Eid". Ex-PM and convener of Awaam Pakistan Party Abbasi has confirmed that TTAP chief Achakzai had consulted him on the national conference being held on February 26-27.

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Pakistan foreign ties suffered in previous tenure

Those who sought to destabilize Pakistan are now ashamed of actions: PML-N leader

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Senior PML-N leader Hanif Abbasi claimed that those responsible for undermining Pakistan's unity are now facing remorse. Speaking at a ceremony in the twin cities, Abbasi emphasized that facilitating traders has remained a priority for his party. He asserted that the country is on the trajectory of development, with even opponents acknowledging the government's performance over the past year. He reiterated that those who sought to destabilize Pakistan are now ashamed of their actions. "Politics of chaos and discord is not in the national interest."

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Youth can shape future of country, says Tarar

Attaulah Tarar underscored the importance of educating the youth

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar said on Sunday that youths had played a significant role in the creation of Pakistan and there was no doubt that they were future of the country. Addressing an interactive session at the 9th Annual Youth General Assembly conference at Aiwan-i-Iqbal, he said, "It is very important for nations to learn from their past. There are two types of history, one is glorious history which makes you feel proud and another history highlights mistakes." He said that the two nation theory was most relevant in today's world and added

Continued on Page 06

US unfreezes \$ 397 mln to track Pak F-16 operations

Official says funds aimed to ensure F-16 fighter employed for counter-terrorism operations not against India

DNA

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration released \$5.3 billion in previously frozen foreign aid, mostly for security and counter-narcotics programs, according to a list of exemptions reviewed by Reuters that included only limited humanitarian relief. The released funds also included \$397 million for a US-backed programme in Pakistan

Continued on Page 06



BAKU: Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Yaqub Abdulla oğlu Eyyubov received Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif who arrived at Heydar Aliyev International Airport for an official visit. –DNA

Shehbaz to meet Azerbaijan President

PM lands in Baku as trade, energy & defense on agenda

Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements are expected to be signed, further solidifying the partnership between the two countries

DNA

BAKU: Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, arrived in Baku for a two-days official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan. Upon arrival at Heydar Aliyev International Airport, the Prime Minister was warmly received by senior Azerbaijani officials, including First Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Yaqub Abdulla o lu Eyyubov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Yalchin Rafiyev, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Khazar Farkhadov, Pakistan's Ambassador to Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Qasim Mohiuddin, and other senior dignitaries. During the visit, the Prime Minister will hold high-level meetings with the President of Azerbaijan, H.E. Ilham Aliyev and other senior Azerbaijani officials. The discussions will focus on further strengthening bilateral relations,

Continued on Page 06

Govt hopes to reduce burden on salaried class

Aurangzeb highlights positive economic indicators, including rise in remittance senders to 35m

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Sunday announced plans to reduce the financial burden on the salaried class in the upcoming budget. His remarks came days after thousands of government employees staged a protest demonstration in Islamabad, demanding withdrawal of pension reforms and increase in pay and allowances.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Country needs to get rid of rigging

Salman Akram Raja country needs to get rid of corruption, rigging for prosperity

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Secretary General Salman Akram Raja has said the country needed to get rid of rigging and corruption for any development. Addressing the media outside Quaid Musoleum flanked by PTI leaders, he said his party had been doing politics like the one pursued by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal. He said the PTI was robbed off of its due share as the Karachites gave the party 22 seats in the 2024 elections. He said Imran Khan has always taken a stand for the people of the city. Raja said his party did not want power at any sake but through rightful means but it only wanted to give the people their rights.

48 more Pakistanis deported

31 individuals were deported –rom Saudi Arabia for reasons such as being blacklisted, overstaying

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A total of 48 Pakistanis have been deported from six different countries, including Saudi Arabia and UAE. According to immigration sources, 31 individuals were deported from Saudi Arabia for reasons such as being blacklisted, lacking passports, completing sentences, overstaying work permits, working without a sponsor, or fleeing from jobs. Meanwhile, 12 Pakistanis were deported from Oman for being blacklisted, overstaying visas, or illegally entering the country.

Fans disappointed India dash Pakistan Champions Trophy hopes

Virat Kohli scores century; Pak players fail to perform in all fields; Rizwan hopeful of performing well in next tournaments

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: Virat Kohli smashed his 51st ODI century to power India to a resounding six-wicket victory over Pakistan in the high-octane ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 clash here at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday. Chasing a modest 242-run target, India comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of four wickets and 45 balls to spare, thanks to a match-defining 114-run partnership between Kohli and Shreyas Iyer. The former champions got off to a brief flamboyant start to the pursuit as their openers Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill added 31 runs in 29 deliveries until Shaheen Shah Afridi gave Pakistan their first success by bowling the Indian captain on 20. India's star batter Kohli then joined Gill in the middle and kept India in control with a 69-run partnership which culminated with the opener's dismissal in the 18th over. Gill scored 46 off

52 deliveries with the help of six boundaries. Kohli then joined forces with Iyer and put India in touching distance to the victory by stitching a 114-run partnership, amid which, both batters scored their respective half-centuries. The duo appeared in complete control to steer India over the line but Khushdil Shah caused a minor stir by dismissing Iyer, who struck five fours and a six on his way to a 67-ball 56. India then suffered another blow to their run chase in the next over when Shaheen got Hardik Pandya (eight) caught behind. The back-to-back blows, however, did not bother India much as Kohli ensured that there were no further hiccups in the run chase. Virat Kohli remained the top-scorer for India with an unbeaten 100 off 111 balls, laced with seven boundaries. For Pakistan, Shaheen picked up two wickets, while Abrar and Khushdil made one scalp apiece. Opting to bat first, the hosts could accumulate 241 runs before getting

Continued on Page 06

Security forces kill 7 terrorists in DI Khan

ISPR says two separate engagements took place in Daraban and Maddi areas of the district

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Security forces have killed at least seven terrorists in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Sunday. The military's media wing said an intelligence-based operation (IBO) was conducted by security forces in general area Daraban on reported presence of militants. "During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarijs [terrorists] location, resultantly, four khwarij were sent to hell," it added. In another encounter that took place in general area Maddi, troops effectively ne ritized hree terrorists, as per ISPR. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area. The ISPR said sa ritized nperations were

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan closes key Afghan border crossing

The move comes amid rising tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan over a surge in militant attacks

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan has shut the Torkham border crossing with Afghanistan after Afghan Taliban authorities began "c"nstruction of trenches and other development work" near the frontier, a senior Pakistani police official said on Sunday. The crossing was closed late Friday night, suspending all pedestrian and trade movement between the two neighbouring countries,

Continued on Page 06



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Court Notice

In the Court Of Imran Asghar Learned Civil Judge Rawalpindi

Suit for Declaration etc. Syed Jawaid Abbas Zaidi Versus Syed Hassan Raza(Late) etc. Notice To, (1) syed Hassan Raza (Late) S/O Syed Tassadduq Abbas (Late) Through his legal heirs (i) Dr. Farzana Zaidi, (ii) Rubina Zaidi, (iii) Shahrukh Abbas, (iv) Shahid Abbas, (v) Sheriyyar Abbas, (vi) Shama Abbas all daughter and sons of Mr. Syed Hassan Raza (Late) Resident of House 112D, 1/11, Nazimabad No.2, Karachi, (2) Syed Muhammad Raza Shah (Late) son of Syed Tassadduq Abbas (Late) through his legal heirs (i) Mst. Shahnaz, (ii) Mst. Shaheena, (iii) Mst. Shaista Zaidi, (iv) Dilawar Abbas all widow and Daughters of Mr Syed Muhammad Raza Shah (Late), R/o House 11 2 D, 1/11, Nazimabad No.2, Karachi, (3) Mohsin Raza (Late) son of Syed Tassadduq Abbas (Late) Through his legal heirs (i) Mst Shammim, (ii) Syed Haider Abbas, (iii) Syed Farrukh Abbas, (iv) Syed Ahsan Abbas, (v) Syed Ali Abbas, (vi) Mrs. Farah, (vii) Syed Hasnain Abbas all wife, sons and daughter of Mr. Mohsin Raza (Late), resident of House No. B 127, Block B, Sateelite Town, Rawalpindi, (4) Syed Nasir Raza (Late) son of Syed Tassadduq Abbas (Late) Through his legal heirs (i) syed Amir Raza, (ii) Syed Mujtaba Raza, (iii) Qurat Ul Ann all sons and daughter of Mr Syed Nasir Raza (Late), Resident of House 112D, 1/11, Nazimabad No.2, Karachi, (5) Razia Firdos (late) daughter of Syed Tassadduq Abbas (Late) Through her legal heirs (i) Zareen Waqar Naqvi, (ii) Samina (rubab) Naqvi, (iii) Ammara (Hureen) Naqvi, (iv) Nargis wife of Ghazanfar Abbas (Late), (v) Muzafar Abbas, (vi) Hasee Asfar Abbas, (vii) Mubashir Abbas, (viii) Syed Zaamin Naqvi, (ix) Uzma Zaidi, (x) Rizwana Jaffer, (xi) Shazia Naqvi, (xii) Zeba, (xiii) Imran Abbas all sons, daughter and sons in law of Mrs Razia (Late) all resident of House 112D, 1/11, Nazimabad No. 2 Karachi, (6) Government of the Punjab Housing Urban Development & Public Health Engineering Department through its Secretary Gulzar e Quaid, Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 25.02.2025 at 9 am avoid exparte proceeding.

Pak-India match live screening arranged in 44 prisons

LAHORE: In a commendable initiative by the Punjab government, special arrangements were made to broadcast the highly anticipated Pakistan-India Champions Trophy match live in 44 prisons across the province. Home Department's spokesperson told media on Sunday that the decision was implemented on the directives of Punjab's Home Secretary Noor-ul-Anam Mengal, who instructed the IG Prisons to ensure necessary arrangements for the inmates. Live screening of the match was also arranged in juvenile detention centers, where young inmates dressed in Pakistan cricket team uniforms thoroughly enjoyed the match, celebrating with traditional drumbeats.—APP

President RCCI, champions industrialization, tax reform

DNA

FAISALABAD: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Usman Shaikat, addressing the 3rd All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference (AP-CPC) at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI), emphasized industrialization as the cornerstone of Pakistan's economic uplift. He highlighted the need for a robust industrial policy to drive growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance exports, said a press release issued here.

In his address during the conference's first session, Usman Shaikat urged the government to adopt a collaborative approach in policy-making. He stressed that taxation



and developed through meaningful consultations with key stakeholders, including chambers of commerce and industry leaders across the country.

NDMA sends 100 tons of essential relief to Gaza

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has sent a 14th humanitarian relief consignment, consisting of 100 tons of essential relief items, to Palestine, reaffirming the nation's steadfast support for the people of Gaza. The consignment, coordinated in partnership with the Al-Khidmat Foundation, includes around 100 tons of critical relief supplies such as bell tents,

winterized tents, tarpaulin sheets, and medical equipment. A send-off ceremony was held at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, attended by senior officials from NDMA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Al-Khidmat Foundation. The aid was shipped via a chartered flight departing from Jinnah International Airport in Karachi to El Arish International Airport in Egypt, from where it will be transported to Gaza. This initiative was carried out under the directives

of the prime minister, reflecting the government's commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza during their time of need. This shipment is part of Pakistan's ongoing humanitarian efforts and marks the 25th overall relief consignment sent to war-affected people of Middle East. With this shipment, Pakistan has dispatched a total of 1,478 tons of relief aid exclusively for Palestine, demonstrating the

country's continued commitment to supporting the people of Gaza in these difficult times. Overall, Pakistan has dispatched 1,961 tons of humanitarian aid, including 372 tons for Lebanon and 111 tons for Syria. The Government of Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to standing with the people of Palestine and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance based on the evolving needs of those affected by the ongoing crisis.

Sharif's era marked by unprecedented public service: Azma

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif's era is marked by prosperity and unprecedented public service. In a statement, she said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has lived up to the expectations of Punjab's people, and the time of those who governed through "magic tricks" is now over. "The people of Pakistan have permanently buried the politics of chaos, anarchy, and instability. Now, the focus across Pakistan will be solely on work, work, and more work," she added. The Information Minister added that the Punjab government has completed its first year of setting historic benchmarks in public service. Maryam Nawaz has fulfilled the aspirations of Punjab's citizens, proving that the PML-N is synonymous with delivering on promises, she added. Azma emphasized that the era of those peddling "imaginary plans" and ruling through deception has ended. Today marks Nawaz Sharif's era—an era dedicated to public service. Maryam Nawaz has achieved historic milestones in just one year, surpassing the accomplishments of previous governments, she added. Azma Bokhari remarked that Maryam Nawaz has fundamentally transformed Pakistan's political landscape. In return for the mandate given by Punjab's people, Maryam Nawaz is steering Punjab toward progress and development. She has adopted good governance, meritocracy, and transparency as her guiding principles, she maintained. The Punjab Information Minister also challenged spokespersons for other provinces to show courage and publicly present their respective Chief Ministers' performance before the nation.

Punjab Air Ambulance rescues 70 patients

LAHORE: The Air Ambulance Service of the Punjab government successfully shifts 70 critical patients from far-flung areas to specialized hospitals for better treatment. Among them, 38 patients were shifted from Bahawalnagar, 25 from Mianwali, two from Rahim Yar Khan, and one each from Bahawalpur, Parachinar, Karachi, Lahore, and Sialkot. The patients shifted on the Air Ambulance included 54 cardiology, 8 spinal injury, 2 head injury and 6 other ailments. The spokesperson for Punjab Emergency Services Department said that launching the Air Ambulance Service in Punjab was a challenging task. "It was essential to find a reliable air service capable of providing an air ambulance on just 30 minutes' notice, ensuring the swift transfer of critically ill and injured patients to specialized hospitals equipped with modern medical facilities. Initially, some air agencies failed to meet the essential emergency response requirements for immediate patient transfers despite several opportunities, making the search for a suitable service provider a challenge," he added. However, Punjab now has a fully operational Air Ambulance Service that has so far successfully shifted 70 patients and emerged as a beacon of hope for critical patients of far-flung areas, providing them with the access to specialized treatment especially patients from districts of Bahawalnagar and Mianwali, he maintained.—DNA

Itwar bazaar offers affordable prices

ISLAMABAD: Itwar Bazar, also known as the Sunday Market, is a lively shopping spot in Islamabad's H-9 sector. Famous for its wide variety of affordable goods, the market offers fresh produce, second-hand clothing, electronics, household items, and more. It operates on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. Shoppers can find everything from fresh fruits, vegetables, and spices to used clothes, toys, gadgets, and home essentials. The market is also a hotspot for street food vendors serving up local favorites. Kamran Raza, the in-charge of the bazar, told APP that the stalls are organized into sections from A to H, with a total of 2,743 stalls. At Itwar Bazar in Islamabad, a portion of the stalls was specifically allocated for female vendors. According to Raza, approximately 100 to 150 stalls were set aside for women, offering them a dedicated space to run their businesses.—DNA

Dasu, Diamir dams' affectees issues to be addressed: Muqam

CHILAS: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs Engr Amir Muqam on Saturday visited Chilas in Gilgit Baltistan, saying that problems of affectees of Dasu Kohistan and Diamir Bhasha dams would be addressed. He said the Prime Minister's Special Committee was analyzing problems of the affected people, reiterating that development of Gilgit Baltistan was the top priority of the Government. He said 30 percent increase in its development budget was made. Engr Amir Muqam said that inauguration of Danash Schools would be made after Eid. He proposed the affectees to constitute their committee for negotiations. Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Gulzar Khan has appealed the affectees for calling off sit in. The committee of the affectees sought time.—APP

CM Punjab transplant programme launched

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has launched the 'Chief Minister Punjab Transplant Programme', terming it the most comprehensive transplant initiative in the country's history. For the first time, five major transplant procedures – liver, kidney, bone marrow, cornea, and cochlear implants – would be conducted free of cost for the deserving patients, said a handout issued here on Sunday. Through this initiative, Punjab residents in need could undergo transplant surgeries at the government's expense, ensuring access to life-saving treatments. Cochlear implants would also be provided for young children born with hearing impairments, enabling them to lead normal lives. Patients could register with the Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) to avail these facilities. Additionally,

transplants would be available not only at government hospitals but also in selected private hospitals. To facilitate access to information, the Punjab government has set up a toll-free helpline: 09009 0800. CM Maryam Nawaz highlighted the government's commitment to public welfare, saying "The state recognises the needs of every citizen, and we will fulfill our responsibility. Organ transplantation is a highly complex and costly procedure that most people cannot afford. Now, the government will take on this responsibility. She added that with cochlear implants, children born deaf will regain their hearing and live normal lives. Similarly, successful corneal transplants will restore vision for those suffering from blindness. The CM assured the public that the government will bear all expenses for liver and kidney transplants, ensuring that no financial burden falls on patients.

Vintage car show held

LAHORE: In celebration of the Horse and Cattle Show 2025, the Vintage Classic Car Club of Pakistan, in collaboration with PHA, organized a Vintage Car Show at the Polo Ground, GOR-1, here on Sunday. Over 100 unique cars, scooters, luxury, and expensive vehicles were displayed at the event. Among the notable entries were rare cars like the 1928 Rolls Royce (used by the Nawab of Bahawalpur), 1930 Packard (USA), and 1930 Cadillac (USA). Car enthusiasts from all over participated in the event, capturing memorable photos with these rare and luxury vehicles. International experts, including Olivia Farnse (France), Mrs. Anis Sofi (France), and Fatimi Nasir, along with Kh. Babar Salman from Pakistan, took on the judging duties for the competition. The event was graced by the presence of Mohsin Ikram, the President of Vintage Classic Car Club of Pakistan, along with families.—APP

Experts outline path to economic growth for Pakistan at webinar

ISLAMABAD: The Alliance Good Governance Foundation hosted an insightful webinar titled "Future Economy: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan" that brought together leading economists, researchers, and policymakers to discuss the future of Pakistan's economy. They webinar emphasized the importance of structural reforms, good governance, and long-term economic policies as key factors for country's economic growth, said a press release issued here on Sunday. The event delved into the country's evolving economic landscape, highlighting the key challenges Pakistan faces and exploring opportunities for growth and development. The webinar, moderated by journalists Shabbir Hussain and Husna Khattak, explored Pakistan's economic challenges, including inflation, unemployment, and fiscal mismanagement. The panelists emphasized the importance of policy reforms, transparency, and global cooperation to address these issues. They also highlighted opportunities in digital transformation, Islamic finance, and public health to unlock economic potential. Chairperson of International Relations & Political Science at International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Dr. Noor Fatima, pointed out structural weaknesses in Pakistan's economy, stressing the need for a strategic framework to tackle inflation, unemployment, and external debt. Financial strategist Babar Aziz Mirza highlighted inefficiencies in resource allocation and called for stronger regulatory oversight. "One of our biggest hurdles is the misallocation of resources and lack of fiscal discipline," Mirza remarked. Commerce and IT expert Zawar Mohiuddin discussed the untapped potential of Pakistan's digital economy, advocating for investments in IT infrastructure and e-commerce. "Pakistan's digital economy is an untapped goldmine. With proper investments in IT infrastructure and e-commerce, we can create jobs and attract foreign investment," he noted. Senior journalist M. Riaz Thaheem and healthcare leader Dr. Samina Maatoo underscored the link between public health and economic productivity, urging investments in healthcare to reduce long-term economic strains. Sana Ullah Ghuman of PANAH emphasized the economic impact of non-communicable diseases and called for preventive healthcare policies.—APP

Kundi for watering barren lands instead of destroying fertile land

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi reaffirmed his commitment to standing by farmers, cultivators, and landowners, saying that he would ensure their suggestions reached the provincial government.

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday criticized the provincial government for prioritizing the destruction of already fertile lands, instead of focusing on providing water to barren lands to make them fertile. He said this in a 'Farmers' Convention' at the Governor House to safeguard the rights of farmers and ensure a brighter future for them. The convention saw a large gathering of farmers, including representatives from various political parties, agricultural organizations, and a

diverse range of farmers, cultivators, and landowners from across the province, stretching from Chitral to Dera Ismail Khan. The convention focused on the strong criticism by farmers to the provincial government's proposed agricultural income tax, which they labeled as a discriminatory move. Participants vehemently rejected the tax, deeming it an oppressive action, and voiced their concerns while putting forward various suggestions for the bill's revision. The convention also declared their intention to launch a

movement if their recommendations and proposed amendments were not included in the bill. Farmers and landowners expressed their gratitude towards Governor Faisal Karim Kundi for organizing the convention and acknowledged his commitment to addressing their issues. Parliamentary leader of PPP Ahmad Karim Kundi, welcomed the farmers and assured them that their suggestions would be compiled into joint recommendations and presented to the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari.

PPP's provincial president, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, also addressed the convention, saying that if the provincial government did not retract the harsh tax and address the concerns of farmers, a full-fledged movement would be launched. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, while addressing the gathering, warmly welcomed all the participants to the Governor House. He reaffirmed his commitment to standing by farmers, cultivators, and landowners, saying that he would ensure their suggestions reached the provincial government.

He highlighted the Pakistan Peoples Party's long-standing history of advocating for farmers' rights and pledged to continue this tradition by raising their voices on every platform. The Governor criticized the provincial government for focusing on destroying already fertile lands instead of providing water to barren lands to make them fertile. He also condemned the imposition of the agricultural income tax, saying that it would add undue pressure on an already struggling agricultural sector.—DNA

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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
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Rs 1.35m cash prizes, literary awards presented to writers, poets & critics

Rabbani lauds Perveen Shakir Trust's efforts for promoting book-reading culture in society

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman of the Senate and leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Raza Rabbani has called for reviving the vital link that exists between the reader and the book and commended the efforts of the Perveen Shakir Trust (PST) for working in that direction and promoting a culture of reading and writing in society. Addressing as Chief Guest the PST literature festival and award-giving ceremony here on the other day at a local hotel, Raza Rabbani paid tributes to the trust's Chairperson Parveen Qadir Agha, Secretary General Raana Seerat, short story writer Mazharul Islam and other organizers of the event. Senator Raza Rabbani said it was quite heartening to see the PST making endeavours not only to keep alive the memory of the great poet Perveen Shakir but also promoting a culture of book-reading in the country which otherwise is fast diminishing. A large number of art and literature lovers attended the festivals. Literary luminaries like Asghar Nadeem Syed, Prof Fateh Muhammad Malik, Dr Najiba Arif, Muhammad Hameed Shahid, Nasir Ali Syed, Muhammad Asim Butt, Naheed Qamar, Rafaqat Javed, Muhammad Saleem Sethi, Tahir Sherazi, Sabin Younas and others also participated in various sessions of the day-long festival that was creatively designed by Mazharul Islam. A marathon reading of Perveen Shakir's poetry, lively debates on 'Kitaban Udaas Hain: Kitab ka Mustaqbil' were also among the highlights of the festival. Besides, discussion on the books written on Perveen Shakir and her poetry 'Perveen Shakir: Nay Zawayi, nay Mutalaaq' 'Perveen Shakir Alamatiyat kay Tanazir Main' and 'Tragedy and Defiance: The Lives and Poetry of Sylvia Plath, Forugh Farrokhzad, and Perveen Sha-



ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman Senate Mian Raza Rabbani presenting Aks-e-Khushbu Award along with Rs50,000 cash prize to Chairperson of the PAL, Dr Najiba Arif for her book of short stories 'Meethay Nalkay' during the PST Literature Festival.

kir' by Mahmood Ali Ayub also warmed the audience's hearts. Raza Rabbani congratulated the PST on opening its chapter last year in Canada. Now Perveen's poetry will find audience overseas also, he said. Chairperson of PST, Mrs Parveen Qadir Agha earlier in her welcome address briefed the Chief Guest and the audience about the primary job of the trust i.e. to keep Perveen Shakir's memory and heritage alive over the past 30 years (Perveen Shakir died on Dec 26, 1994 in a fatal road accident in Islamabad). This year's festival is being held after a period of four years be-

cause of COVID-19 and other reasons but now we shall try to hold on an annual basis, she assured the audience. She also paid rich compliments to the members of the PST for their unwavering support for last 30 years. Their effort in keeping the legacy of Perveen Shakir's legacy is truly commendable, she said. A number of awards were also given on the occasion along with cash prizes of total amount Rs1.35 million. Mazharul Islam was given Nayyar Adbi Award for his 2023 novel 'Sarun Cranes Have Flown out of their Dreams' along with Rs200,000/-.

Well-known fiction writer, Mustansar Husain Tarar received (in absentia) 'Husn-e-Funn' award along with Rs100,000/-. Likewise, Anjad Islam Anjad Adbi award was presented to Hameeda Shaheen (in absentia) for 'Zinda Hoon' along with Rs100,000. Another literary stalwart Prof Fateh Muhammad Malik received Mian Atta Rabbani Award along with a cash prize of Rs 100,000/- for his book 'Ashyana-e-Ghurbat say Ashiaan dar Ashiaan'. Chairperson of the PAL, Dr Najiba Arif received Aks-e-Khushbu Award 2022 along with Rs50,000 cash prize for her book of short

stories 'Meethay Nalkay.' Muhammad Hameed Shahid (Iqbal Fareed Adbi Award 2023 along with Rs50,000 for his autobiography Khushbu ki Diwar Kay Peechay), Khurshid Rabbani (Sultan Mahmood Qazi Adbi Award 2021 with Rs50,000 for his book Ghubaar-e-Ayna), Asim Butt (Begum Sarfraz Iqbal Award 2024 with Rs50,000 for Kafka Kahayan), Saleem Sethi (Begum Sarfraz Iqbal Adbi Award 2021 with Rs50,000 for his translation of Attar's Mantaqul Tairand) others also received various awards including PST's Aks-e-Khushbu Awards.

DC calls for ensuring robust safety protocols for teams

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon has chaired a high-level security review meeting in preparation for the upcoming Champions Trophy matches at Rawalpindi Stadium. The meeting focused on ensuring robust safety protocols for teams, spectators, and the surrounding areas. Key stakeholders, including police and security agencies, participated to finalize arrangements and address potential challenges. The meeting was attended by representatives from various security agencies, including the police, to discuss and evaluate safety measures for the international cricket event. A major focus was on traffic management during the matches, with specific routes being assessed to minimize disruptions and ensure smooth movement. According to the briefing provided by the Islamabad Police, over 900 surveillance cameras will be deployed to monitor the movement of cricket teams and the public. Continuous 24-hour surveillance will cover routes from the airport to hotels, the stadium, and surrounding areas. Additionally, drone cameras, 202 body-worn cameras, and vehicle tracking systems will be utilized to enhance security coverage across all routes and accommodations. The DC emphasized the need for foolproof security arrangements, instructing officials to leave no room for error. The comprehensive plan includes monitoring all access points, residential areas, and critical infrastructure to ensure a safe environment for players, officials, and fans. The meeting also highlighted the importance of coordination among security agencies to address any potential threats swiftly. With the Champions Trophy being a high-profile event, the authorities are committed to maintaining a secure and hassle-free experience for everyone involved. The collaborative efforts of law enforcement and security agencies aim to deliver a safe and seamless event, ensuring that cricket enthusiasts can enjoy the matches without concerns.--DNA

Youth must embrace technology to lead world: Farid

RAWALPINDI: The Gordonians Own, alumni association of Gordon College Rawalpindi, recently hosted a reunion event at their alma mater. Organized by Mian Akram Farid, Central Chairman of EFP, former President of ICCI, and former Vice President of FPCCI; Kahkashan Najmi, Brigadier (Ret.), Muhammad Asif; and US-based alumni Malik Qadir and Malik Muhammad Iqbal Shirazi, the gathering brought together distinguished alumni who have achieved prominent positions in government and various fields. Among the attendees were notable figures such as Akram Sheikh, former Advisor to the Prime Minister and former Secretary of the Planning Commission (who joined Gordon College in 1957); former Federal Minister Raja Shahid Zafar; former Advisor to the Prime Minister and former President of Gordon College Union Raja Muhammad Anwar; former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission Major (Ret.) Pervez Butt; Atomic Energy Commission's Shaikat Hamid; Khalid Javed; Nasir Khan; Mian Abdul Rauf; Akhlaq; Colonel (Ret.) Iftikhar Hamdani; Liaquat Dar; Tariq Javed Butt; Muhammad Tahir; Akhlaq; Athar Habib; Professor Maqsood Jafri; Shahid Masood; Raja Mahfouz; Arshad Butt; Naveed Altaf; Mian Taj Muhammad; Gulam Qureshi; Muhammad Ali; Hamid Habib; Nasreen Tariq; Fatima Azim; along with college faculty, students, and other distinguished guests. Dr. Muhammad Gulfranz Abbasi, Principal of Gordon College, along with Vice Principal Professor Dr. Kamran Naseem, faculty, and students, warmly welcomed the attendees upon their arrival.--APP

IFA special training for salt manufacturers

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) in collaboration with Nutrition International, has launched a series of training sessions aimed at salt manufacturers in the Federal Capital. The initiative focuses on promoting the production of iodized salt, ensuring better health outcomes for citizens. In this regard, a specialized training session was held at the Islamabad Food Authority office, attended by salt factory owners from the region. The session was led by Deputy Director of IFA, Dr. Tahira Siddique, who emphasized the importance of iodized salt in daily diets. During the training, experts highlighted the critical role of iodine in human health. Iodine is essential for brain development and helps prevent diseases like goiter. The session also covered key aspects of salt production, including quality standards, packaging, and hygiene practices. Dr. Tahira Siddique stated that the primary goal of these sessions is to ensure the availability of high-quality salt for consumers. She noted that salt is a fundamental ingredient in all meals, making its quality a public health priority. The training is part of a broader effort by the Islamabad Food Authority to improve food safety standards in the city. By educating manufacturers, the authority aims to reduce health risks associated with low-quality salt and promote better nutrition. The session concluded with a call to action for manufacturers to adopt best practices in salt production. The Islamabad Food Authority plans to continue these training programs, targeting other sectors of the food industry in the coming months.--APP

Social media influence makes wedding events expensive

ISLAMABAD: In wake of high influence of social and digital media, a significant change in wedding traditions had been observed in the country. Due to increasing such influence, wedding culture had undergone a significant transformation in recent years with addition of many new trends. Now this simple celebration had evolved into a lavish, week-long extravaganza, complete with multiple events and excessive spending. The rise of new, elaborate traditions such as "Bride-to-Be" parties, Mehndi nights, and Dholki celebrations had contributed to the shift mainly due to having such trends in tv dramas and showbiz personalities in social media. These events, often characterized by lavish food, decorations, and entertainment, have become an integral part of Pakistani wedding culture. According to wedding planners and industry experts, the average cost of a wedding in Pakistan has skyrocketed, with some families spending upwards of Rs five million on a single event. Imtiaz Niazi a wedding planner said the wedding industry in Pakistan has become a multi-billion-rupee market as families willing spend exorbitant amounts of money to make their wedding celebrations unforgettable not for just family members but for getting popularity and likes in social media apps like Facebook, Instagram and tiktok. However, not everyone is pleased with the shift towards excess. Still many families feel that emphasis on materialism and extravagance has overshadowed the true meaning of marriage. "The focus should be on the union of two people, not on how much money we can spend on decorations and food, he stated, Marriage Bureau head Mrs Khan said these excessive traditions have led to unnecessary expenses, with some families spending millions on a single event adding that this has created a culture of competition, where families feel pressured to outdo one another in terms of extravagance and opulence.--DNA

AIOU holds seminar on 'Cancer Awareness'

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has organized a national seminar on 'Cancer Awareness'. Dr. Muhammad Kashif, Associate Surgeon (Oncologist) at Federal Government Polyclinic Hospital was the chief guest, while it was presided over by Dr. Zaheer Ahmed, Chairman of the Department of Nutritional Sciences & Environmental Design. During his lecture on cancer, Dr. Muhammad Kashif emphasized the importance of recognizing early symptoms to effectively combat the disease. While discussing the causes, stages, types, symptoms, and treatment strategies for cancer, he highlighted key warning signs, including lumps in any part of the body, non-healing ulcers or wounds, coughing up blood, persistent indigestion, blood in urine or stool, and unexpected vaginal bleeding. He stressed the need to consult a doctor if such symptoms appear, as early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes. Dr. Kashif further stated that the most common type of cancer among women is breast cancer, while in men, prevalent forms include prostate, lung, intestinal, stomach, and blood cancers. He added that if diagnosed in the early stages, many types of cancer can be successfully treated. The seminar was organized by the Department of Nutritional Sciences & Environmental Design under the Faculty of Sciences, with Dr. Mehpara Jadoon serving as the event coordinator.--APP

Action taken against 7,883 wrong parking violators

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) have launched a strict crackdown against wrong parking violators, taking action against 7,883 drivers and impounding 253 vehicles for occupying footpaths this month. Special squads have been deployed to ensure smooth traffic flow and pedestrian access. A public relations officer told media that the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi had issued special directions to curb wrong parking and clear pedestrian areas. Following these directives, traffic police teams are conducting operations across the city to remove illegally parked vehicles and prevent encroachments on footpaths. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (ret) Syed Zeeshan Haider has instructed all Zonal DSPs to ensure strict enforcement of traffic laws and take action against those disrupting traffic discipline. "The right of pedestrians to use footpaths will be ensured, and no vehicle will be allowed to park there," the CTO Zeeshan said, adding that designated parking spaces at shopping centers must be used. He also emphasized the importance of public awareness campaigns to educate citizens on responsible parking.--APP

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Briefs

ADB, CDA discuss development of Islamabad Inter-City Bus Terminal

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) met with Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa to discuss key development projects, including the establishment of the Islamabad Inter-City Bus Terminal. During the meeting, Chairman Randhawa was briefed on the completion of the preliminary feasibility report for the Islamabad Inter-City Bus Terminal project. The proposed terminal is set to integrate with the city's existing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system and electric bus services, aiming to enhance urban mobility and reduce traffic congestion in the federal capital. Chairman Randhawa emphasized the need for ADB to develop a comprehensive financial model for the project, which will also include charging infrastructure to support electric buses. —APP

MSEC holds dinner to brought energy experts together

ISLAMABAD: To mark the conclusion of MSEC's second fellowship cohort, a high-level Networking Dinner, in Islamabad, brought together Pakistan's leading energy experts, policymakers, and industry leaders to connect with the next generation of energy and climate professionals. At the event, Zeeshan Ashfaq, CEO of Renewables First, emphasized the broader vision of energy transition, highlighting that it is not just about replacing fossil fuels with renewables, but about building the right people to lead the transition, said a press release. "The energy transition isn't just about swapping coal for the sun or wind for oil — it's about empowering the next generation to lead the charge," Ashfaq said. "At the Margalla School, we are not just teaching energy; we are shaping the leaders who will define its future." —APP

Rang-e-Pakistan Festival commenced with cultural grandeur

ISLAMABAD: The much-awaited Rang-e-Pakistan Festival officially commenced at Lok Virsa featuring a number of cultural activities and stalls depicting heritage of different provinces. The festival is being arranged under the auspices of the Lok Virsa, National Heritage and Culture Division. The festival was inaugurated by Federal Secretary for National Heritage and Culture, Hassan Nasir Jami, who emphasized the importance of preserving and promoting Pakistan's rich cultural, historical, and literary heritage. The three-day festival, running from February 22 to 24, will be open daily from 10 AM to 10 PM at the Lok Virsa Complex, Shakarparian, offering an immersive cultural experience to visitors from all walks of life. —APP

Nasir reaffirms ICCI's dedication to trade, industry growth

He further outlined ICCI's proactive approach to business growth, mentioning a series of programs such as expos, business delegations, and international business opportunities conferences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has reiterated the Chamber's unwavering commitment to resolving business community challenges and fostering economic growth. He emphasized ICCI's role as a bridge between the public and private sectors to enhance ease of doing business in Pakistan.

Speaking as the guest of honor at the inauguration of the three-day TopCity-1 Expo 2025, held in collaboration with the ICCI, TopCity-1 and the Waqas International (pvt), Qureshi highlighted key initiatives under his leadership to improve service delivery for ICCI members across trade, industry, and services sectors. These include the adoption of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, digitization of operations, and the upcoming renovation and facelift of the Chamber House.

He further outlined ICCI's proactive approach to business growth, mentioning a series of programs such as expos, business delegations, and international business opportunities conferences. He expressed confidence that these initiatives would stimulate economic activity both regionally and nationally. President Qureshi reaffirmed the Chamber's ongoing engagement with key government bodies such as the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), and Islamabad

Electric Supply Company (IESCO) to address business sector challenges and ensure a seamless commercial environment. Commending TopCity-1 Expo 2025 as a significant step towards economic revival, he assured full ICCI support for similar private-sector initiatives in the future. "This expo is a testament to the resilience of Pakistan's business community and its determination to drive national progress despite all challenges," he stated.

The event was attended by a distinguished gathering, including ICCI Founder Group Chairman Tariq Sadiq, SVP Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, VP Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Council members Zubair Malik, Ejaz Abbasi, Zafar Bakhtawari, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Khalid Javid, and various executive members including Malik Mohsin Khalid, Ishaq Sial, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Aftab Gujjar, Sanullah Khan and Tahir Ayub. Former SVP Faad Waheed, Special Advisor Naeem Siddiqui, and other key figures also graced the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: People watching ICC Champion Trophy cricket match playing between Pakistan and India on TV in a local restaurant in the federal capital.

NUML inaugurates training program EnglishWorks

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) inaugurated the Country-wide Training of English-Works, enhancing employability skills and English proficiency among Pakistani youth. "EnglishWorks" is a U.S.-funded initiative under the Regional English Language Office (RELO) that equips young Pakistanis with essential skills for professional success, said a press release. The program focuses on English communication for business and various professions, critical thinking, problem-solving, personality development, and 21st-century digital and soft skills. To date, 6,000 youth have benefited from the program. From 2023 to 2025, NUML is training an additional 2,655 students, preparing them for their future careers. The inauguration ceremony was led by Rector NUML, Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI (M) (Retd), with Mr Jerrold Frank, Head of RELO at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, the Rector NUML underscored the importance of employability skills for Pakistani youth and the need to train educators who can guide them toward successful careers. He highlighted the role of such initiatives in strengthening Pakistan's socio-economic growth and global image as a progressive nation. Expressing gratitude to the U.S. Embassy, he emphasized how these programs empower young Pakistanis to excel in freelancing, e-commerce, and digital marketing, leveraging opportunities in the expanding e-economy. Mr. Mr. Jerrold Frank expressed his happiness to be heading this exemplary initiative. Reflecting on his visits to various sites of the "EnglishWorks" program; stretched from Karachi to Khyber and Gilgit. He praised NUML's efforts in providing quality education, particularly in English and other languages, to uplift communities across the country. The ceremony was attended by officials from RELO and NUML, along with a large number of English teachers from various cities across Pakistan, reinforcing a collective commitment to enhancing education and career opportunities for Pakistani youth. —DNA

PHA expands Halal verification framework

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the Pakistan Halal Authority (PHA), Akhtar A. Bughio, on Sunday said that authority was committed to strengthening its halal certification framework to align with global standards. Talking to a PTV news, he said that the role of PHA in ensuring that all consumables, including cosmetics and processed goods, are free from non-halal ingredients through a rigorous verification process. He said that PHA was dedicated to his role to identify halal products and certify and mark those products so that consumers have complete assurance regarding their purchases. Answering a question, he said that Muslim-majority countries assume locally available products are halal, but the global market requires proper certification to verify authenticity. Where, Non-Muslim countries have significantly contributed to the halal market and have

captured a major share. Pakistan, despite entering the sector later, is now actively working to streamline certification processes to align with global practices, he added. He further said that modern food processing methods raise questions about the traceability and source of ingredients. The PHA ensures that no haram substances are present in certified products through a rigorous verification system. The authority integrates technology with religious principles to maintain credibility, he added. He also highlighted the issue of self-claimed halal products, noting that some entities falsely label products as halal. To counter this, PHA has established a facilitation center where consumers can verify product certification. Answering a question regarding international collaboration, he said that Pakistan has initiated agreements with global halal certification bodies, including those in the United States and Russia. Recently, an MoU was signed with Turkey during President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Pakistan, strengthening bilateral cooperation in the halal sector. He further stated that authority plans to launch a halal certification mobile application within the next six months. The app will allow consumers to scan QR codes on products to instantly verify their halal status, including certification details and production origin. He added that PHA is actively engaging with local and international halal bodies and has partnered with 17 organizations, including universities and technology institutes, to enhance research and training in halal certification. He expressed pride in the organization's structured recruitment and training processes, ensuring that young professionals are well-equipped to contribute to the sector. The director general was committed to adopt international best practices to strengthen its halal certification framework, ensuring transparency and credibility in the global halal market.

Pakistan's prefabricated containerized data center launched

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first prefabricated containerized data center has been launched. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Syed Arsalan Manzoor, Country Manager of Data Center Facility and Critical Business at Huawei, highlighted the importance of this project, noting that it will support the educational sector's growing needs for research, digital learning, and administration. Utilizing the company's innovative modular technology, the data center aims to propel Pakistan into a new era of digital transformation, meeting the demands of the digital age and contributing to the nation's technological progress, he added. The Center was jointly launched by Huawei Pakistan, in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and DWP Technologies. This state-of-the-art facility is set to significantly advance the country's digital infrastructure by offering efficient and scalable solutions for data management. The Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, inaugurated the state-of-the-art Astrolabe Data Center at NED University of Engineering and Technology in Karachi. This landmark initiative is the part of the government's E-Pakistan initiative under the Uraan Pakistan program, representing a substantial step toward modernizing Pakistan's technological infrastructure and fostering a knowledge-based economy. The Astrolabe Data Center is designed to revolutionize Pakistan's technological landscape by supporting big data analytics, offering Maktab ERP solutions, and providing high-performance computing services, including AI-Sadeem and AI-Meidsa, at subsidized rates for students, researchers, and industry professionals. According to the latest data from the Data Center Map, Pakistan is home to a total of 22 data centers spread across its major cities. Karachi, the country's largest city and economic hub, leads with 10 data centers, reflecting its status as a central point for business and technology. Lahore, known for its growing IT sector and industrial base, follows closely with 8 data centers, while Islamabad, the capital city and a hub for government and educational institutions, hosts 4 data centers. —DNA

Iran keen to enhance counter terrorism coop with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Renowned counter terrorism expert at S. Rajaratnam Institute of International Studies (RSIS) Singapore, Abdul Basit, emphasized that counter terrorism cooperation with Pakistan remains a top priority for Iran. He expressed these views while expressing views at an event held by Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad. He said that since Iran and Pakistan shared a fragile border vulnerable to violent attacks by armed non-state actors therefore border security was a mutual concern Senior Fellow Abdul Basit underlined that the persistence of militant activities across Pak-Iran border necessitated a well-coordinated strategy to enhance security and curb insurgent movements. The visit of late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan led to an increased focus on security coordination and intelligence sharing but the region's volatility was further heightened by the presence of terrorist groups like ISKP which had carried out attacks in both countries. —APP

Mental wellbeing of Pakistani people

NAIRA ESHAAL

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani society faces many psychological issues due to cultural norms, political instability, and misinformation that has been spread around for ages in the name of religion and values. A lot of people tend to believe that the concept of mental health is just a myth and we often hear people associating serious mental illnesses or disorders with not having a close enough relationship with God. Psychological issues affect people across all demographics, yet stigma and lack of resources prevent many from seeking professional help.

People often struggle with constant stress and anxiety. Many factors can make a person feel anxious or burdened most of the time. Pakistan's economic instability has led to many companies being shut down, leaving people unemployed. The country also faces issues regarding inflation, and without jobs and a stable income, it is hard for people to provide for their families and raise their kids. Men are usually the breadwinners and the sole providers of the house which puts constant pressure on them to fulfill their family's needs. Depression remains one of the most common but least acknowledged psychological disorders in Pakistan. Due to the stig-

ma surrounding mental health, a huge percentage of people hesitate to seek professional help, often dismissing their symptoms as temporary sadness. A lot of the time, in extreme cases, untreated depression can lead to suicidal thoughts, a growing concern in recent years. Students face immense academic pressure to excel in competitive fields and are constantly being compared to other family members or friends of their age. We often see cases of suicide daily and a lot of those are solely because of too much academic pressure. Parents in their time had the same amount of academic pressure imposed on them and this generational

trauma carries down for centuries. Generational trauma stems from deeply ingrained psychological wounds passed down through families due to historical, social, and personal experiences of extreme stress or suffering. It affects individuals and entire communities, shaping their behaviors, emotions, and coping mechanisms. Some key sources of generational trauma are war and conflict, Domestic Violence and Abuse, Poverty and Financial Struggles, Parenting Styles Shaped by Trauma, and Cultural Expectations and Repression. Generational trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are deeply connected because unresolved trauma

from one generation can create PTSD-like symptoms in the next, even if they didn't directly experience the original traumatic event. People who experience severe trauma develop PTSD later in life which in turn alters their behavior and emotional regulation. It is often left untreated and then unconsciously passed down to the next generation. Children of trauma can exhibit PTSD-like emotions without even direct exposure to the trauma. Many studies suggest that severe trauma can alter genes affecting stress responses in later generations. —The Writer is doing bachelor's in Psychology and can be reached at nayra.eshal@gmail.com

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

AI that Silicon Valley fears

IT has been over a month since the launch of DeepSeek AI sent shock waves through the global tech and investor landscape, reverberating far beyond the confines of Silicon Valley. This wasn't solely about algorithms or data; it was a bold statement of innovation, a challenge to the entrenched dominance of Silicon Valley, and a mirror held up to the hypocrisy of zero-sum Western capitalism. Why? Because DeepSeek's defining feature wasn't a groundbreaking technological advancement – it was the willingness to make it open source. It shattered the myth that capitalism only thrives when ideas are privatised for individual gain, often at great expense to public good. It defied the notion that creations can remain sovereign to their inventors, which ignores the reality that all innovation builds on the work of others. This was a rare victory for the nascent shoots of a post-predatory capitalism that prioritises global public goods over profit maximisation – a model that remains anathema to Silicon Valley. DeepSeek is a gesture of goodwill, and in that sense a deep provocation. It is also a symbol of what happens when bullies hard-wired with a sense of exceptionalism and privilege are confronted by a competitor that refuses to be intimidated or sidelined. Predictably, DeepSeek's debut was met with a barrage of accusations. Western critics claimed it had evaded export controls, stolen intellectual property from OpenAI, exaggerated its capabilities, and was inherently flawed due to its Chinese origins. Others dismissed it as inferior because of its built-in censorship mechanisms. Some countries have even called for bans under the pretext of security concerns. But these accusations, if not entirely baseless, do reek of hypocrisy. The same critics who denounce China for allegedly bypassing export controls often turn a blind eye when Western companies do the same for their own interests. The claim that DeepSeek "stole" intellectual property from OpenAI conveniently ignores the fact that OpenAI itself trained its own models on vast swathes of the internet without regard for intellectual-property rights – a practice now under legal scrutiny. As for censorship, let's not pretend Silicon Valley's platforms are neutral arbiters of truth. They, too, are shaped by political and corporate agendas. If DeepSeek was a US start-up built with limited resources, it would have been celebrated as a shining example of American ingenuity and capitalism. Instead, because it was Chinese and open source, it was dismissed as suspect rather than heralded as a breakthrough for global public good. The racist undertones are hard to ignore. This reaction exposed what many in the industry already know: the notion of "tech for good" has long been a facade, masking a ruthless zero-sum mentality that prizes dominance over collaboration. This insecurity reflects Silicon Valley's struggle to adapt to a world in which it no longer monopolises innovation. The US tech sector has become addicted to excessive start-up capital, chasing the next unicorn or astronomical return. This culture of overfunding has normalised a dependency on financial engineering rather than fostering genuine, resourceful innovation.



Wounds of the 1944 deportation

A DAY before Ukraine marks three years since the full-scale Russian invasion, the Chechen and Ingush peoples are commemorating the 81st anniversary of their forced expulsion by the communist regime in Moscow. The impact of this genocidal operation, which began on February 23, 1944 on the orders of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, continues to reverberate today throughout the North Caucasus and beyond. The decades-long efforts to suppress the memory of this violent expulsion and the refusal of Moscow to acknowledge and apologise for it have ensured that it remains an open wound for the Chechen and Ingush people. I distinctly recall being six or seven years old when I first heard the term "deportation". It slipped from the lips of one of my parents, only to be swiftly followed by silence. Soviet authorities in the early 1980s still had a strong grip over the country and resolutely suppressed discussions of this topic, particularly within the Chechen and Ingush autonomous republics. Adults lived in an atmosphere of fear and mistrust and were very cautious about discussing the topic even in front of their children. A child repeating the word in front of strangers or at school could attract the attention of the Soviet secret police, the KGB, and lead to some kind of punishment. The era of Perestroika, marked by increased openness and the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union, lifted the veil of silence surrounding taboo subjects, including the various crimes the Soviets had committed. The younger generations of Chechen and Ingush peoples began to learn about what had happened to their parents and grandparents. They finally heard the stories of how, during World War II, elite divisions of the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB, and the military were deployed to deport the entire Chechen and Ingush populations from their ancestral lands. Even more chilling was the revelation that Soviet soldiers did not hesitate to kill the elderly and sick to meet the deportation schedule. Their bodies were callously disposed of in mountain lakes. Entire communities were burned down. In the case of the village of Khaibakh, the NKVD burned alive 700 of its residents, including pregnant women, children and the elderly, who could not be transported to train stations in time for deportation due to heavy snowfall. The gruelling three-week journey in rail cars meant for livestock, where people faced starvation and unsanitary conditions, further contributed to the staggeringly high death toll. Dropped off in the Central Asian steppe with no food or shelter, the deportees had little chance of survival. Due to the deportation, the Chechens and Ingush lost almost 25 percent of their populations, according to the official estimate, before they were allowed to go back to their homes in 1957, four years after Stalin's death. In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first democratic elections in the Russian Federation, the state started paying monetary compensation to those who were born or lived in exile. But the amount paid out was meagre and insulting. Still, the Chechen people hoped they would receive a formal apology from newly elected Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Welfare, development & festivities return to PUNJAB (Part-II)

Abdul Rashid Shakir



Madam Chief Minister has also stressed on the need to hire international coaches to bring Punjab's athletes at par with the international standards, preparing them to compete internationally, and win laurels for the country. The Chief Minister has shown strong support for the national sport, hockey, by awarding them a financial grant, reflecting her commitment to preserving Pakistan's sporting heritage. Punjab Government is focused on producing world-class...

OLD maxim, "healthy mind lies in a healthy body," aptly underscores the importance of engaging in healthy sports and physical activities for making a significant contribution in life, failing which reminds of another proverb, "an idle mind is devil's workshop." Greater the population, especially youth, the more prone it is to become a debilitating liability for the Government if not engaged properly in sports, debates, fine arts, social work or politics. Punjab is blessed with a sizeable population of around 128 million, more than 65% of which is below the age of 30 (7th Population & Housing Census-2023, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). Mindful of the need of providing ample opportunities to ensure constructive engagement of its youth bulge, Punjab Government under the inspiring leadership of Chief Minister Madam Maryam Nawaz Sharif is focused on reviving sports in the province by rehabilitating deserted playgrounds and sports arenas. It is committed to nurturing talent, and developing sports infrastructure in the province to ensure better engagement of youth. Multipurpose sports grounds are also being constructed across 91 constituencies, bringing sports facilities closer to communities to foster grass-root-level participation of youth in sports. Immediately after assuming office on 26 February 2024, Madam Chief Minister inaugurated on 02 May the 1st edition of female-exclusive Chief Minister Punjab Pink Games 2024, in order to promote sports in women of the province. Players from 19 universities across Punjab, participated in sports like Athletics, Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Cricket (T20), Hockey and Table Tennis. These games not only redefined sporting landscape of the province, but also promoted gender-balanced participation in sports by showcasing talent of female athletes like never before. Madam Chief Minister also inaugurated another premier sports event 'Khelta Punjab Games 2025' on 30 January 2025 with an aim to hunt young sporting talent across Punjab by organising multi-tiered sports competitions from grassroots to provincial levels. 15,000 sports clubs and a record number of 120,000 athletes across Punjab registered for the

games, showcasing massive potential and deep interest of Punjab's youth in healthy physical activities. These games not only fostered a spirit of sportsmanship and unity among players but also promoted healthy sporting activities in the province by offering them liberal financial awards. 2200 players excelling in the divisional-level competitions of 'Khelta Punjab Games' 2025 were awarded free e-bikes, 30,000 young athletes have been awarded merit-based sports scholarships, and Rs.60,000/- monthly stipend is being given to the intern athletes. A Talent Hunt Program was launched in the province to identify and nurture hidden talent, especially in basketball, in a bid to diversify sporting opportunities in the province. The Government also has plans to launch a 'School Hockey League' and 'Punjab Olympics' to further promote sporting culture in the province. A revitalized Punjab Sports Board, comprising the renowned athletes like Arshad Nadeem (Olympic javelin thrower) and Aisam-ul-Haq (tennis star), has been established with an aim to enhance sports infrastructure, and promote excellence in sports in the province. A Sports Advisory Council featuring former players and students has also been established to ensure inclusive governance and effective decision-making of sports in the province. Madam Chief Minister has also stressed on the need to hire international coaches to bring Punjab's athletes at par with the international standards, preparing them to compete internationally, and win laurels for the country. The Chief Minister has shown strong support for the national sport, hockey, by awarding them a financial grant, reflecting her commitment to preserving Pakistan's sporting heritage. Punjab Government is focused on producing world-class athletes, and making Punjab a hub of sporting talent. Its various initiatives, coupled with the Government's financial commitment, are aimed at creating a sustainable ecosystem for the development of sports, ensuring long-term benefits for the youth and the province. The revival of National Horse & Cattle Show on 09 February 2025, after a hiatus of more than three decades, is another step in the right direction to

afford young athletes, players, artists, craftsmen, agriculturalists and cattle-breeders with plenty of opportunities to showcase their talent, and engage them in a positive and constructive way. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is also committed to promote tourism, especially religious tourism in the province by celebrating on official level various rituals of the minority communities like Besakhi, Easter, Christmas and Diwali. Development of world-class hotels and communication infrastructure is being planned to create an enabling ecosystem for the Sikh, Budh and Hindu pilgrims from across the globe to visit Pakistan and participate in their religious festivities. Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore, Gurdwara JanamAsthana also known as Gurdwara Nankana Sahib some 75 kilometres southwest of Lahore, and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur are some of the highly revered gurdwaras for Sikh community; while Kataraj Temple Complex in Chakwal and Jagannath Mandir in Sialkot are some of the holy temples of Hindu community where members of Sikh and Hindu communities from around the globe flock each year to perform pilgrimage. This would not only provide youth better social engagement, but would also generate countless employment opportunities for them. Upkeep of communication infrastructure like roads and bridges is imperative to achieve this end. For this purpose, the Communication & Works Department of the Government of Punjab is committed to construct, repair and rehabilitate 590 arterial and connector roads, measuring 11,496 kilometers, across Punjab under SarkeinBahaal... Punjab Khushhal (Roads Restored... Punjab Prosperous) Programme. It would not only boost tourism by presenting to the world better infrastructure of the province, but would also attract investment to promote economic activities, ensuring better socio-economic conditions for the people. However, it goes without saying that political stability and continuity of economic policies are needed for a lasting and discernable change that may offer people rich dividends for bringing about positive change in their lives.

Email: arshakir.cmo@gmail.com

Continued...

Europe's tears betray its weakness

Khaled Abou Zahr

No longer can Europe sleepwalk. Vance's speech was truthful and balanced. He did not waste time on the consequences of the illness but focused on the illness itself. Hence, he briefly mentioned Ukraine, Russia and China to focus on the lack of direction from within Europe. Indeed, you cannot fight and defend yourself if you do not know what you stand for or what you need to defend. This is the core of it: the abandonment of Europe's values and their replacement with a powerful bureaucracy...

TWO weeks ago, I compared the European defense posture to the "The Ant and the Grasshopper" fable, which ends with the ant stating: "You were singing? I'm glad to hear it. Well then, dance now." I did not think I would see the fable play out so clearly. Yet, after US Vice President J.D. Vance delivered a straightforward speech to European elites at the Munich Security Conference, the tears of the chairman of the conference during his closing speech were indeed those of the grasshopper who had left himself unprepared for the coming winter. Long before this speech, I had noticed across social media an obsession among European elites, both in politics and business, with the current US administration. It has become the evil that is abandoning Europe. As an example, Elon Musk has become a target of criticism for his innovation in space since he took on the role of reducing waste in the US administration and inviting Europeans to do the same. Now, I am not dissatisfied with the conclusion that calls for greater European responsibility when it comes to key issues such as security, defense and space. Yet, I believe that this obsession is used by some to avoid taking corrective steps and evading accountability for severe past mistakes. I am sure most Europeans would have cheered Vance's speech. However, this is not the case for the European elites, which are looking to deflect the blame for the flawed defense and security policies of recent decades on to the new White House. The theatrics are clear: "It is not our fault, it is Trump's. Europe did not get lazy, it is the US that is abandoning us. Europe did not underspend on defense, it is once again that the US is abandoning us." Yet, what is most worrying to them is not that Donald Trump may be destroying the transatlantic alliance, but rather that he is attempting to destroy the status

quo and end Europe's free ride. Let's face it, Europe's dependency on the US forbade it from being proactive on the geopolitical issues it faced. This is why the same reality check and transformation that is taking place in the US needs to take place in Europe. It is now key for Europe to act swiftly and take back control. It is a necessity to start rebalancing transatlantic relations. There is no escaping this reality. Everyone talks about a partnership with the US, but the reality is that when you are dependent there is no partnership. Despite all the reports and conferences analyzing the new geopolitical world order, the Europeans have not once thought they should push for being stronger within the alliance and hence stronger together. We will not cry over spilt milk, but a stronger Europe would have stopped the war in Ukraine. It would have taken the lead to prevent it in 2022, as well as in 2016 and 2017 to halt the escalation as it was happening. No longer can Europe sleepwalk. Vance's speech was truthful and balanced. He did not waste time on the consequences of the illness but focused on the illness itself. Hence, he briefly mentioned Ukraine, Russia and China to focus on the lack of direction from within Europe. Indeed, you cannot fight and defend yourself if you do not know what you stand for or what you need to defend. This is the core of it: the abandonment of Europe's values and their replacement with a powerful bureaucracy that is unrealistic, along with disconnected policies in energy, security and defense. It did not take much time for Europe's enemies inside and outside to take note. This transformation needs to take place now, but it will of course take time. And when it comes to the transatlantic alliance – which is the bedrock of Europe's security – Europeans need to present a strong plan that shows a true commitment. There

is no doubt that Washington will react positively if there is a true will and adherence to this change. Tears will not defend Europe. Tears invite aggression. It is true that the values of the transatlantic alliance have been flouted. As we say, it takes two to tango and the US has let Europe enjoy a free ride for too long. This is why today there is a historic opportunity for Europe to realign its values and recommit to the alliance as a true partner, not a subordinate. I can hear whispers of the easy way out in European corridors: of waiting for this presidency to end. That four years will not be enough to change policies permanently and that this tension will pass. But this is a dangerous and ostrich-like policy that Europe cannot afford. Hence, Europe should present a clear strategy focusing on defense and geopolitical realignment. This should start by immediately increasing defense spending to meet NATO targets. Moreover, a clear strategy for strengthening European military capabilities should be put in place. And a unified stance on Russia and China. Europeans need to take on a bigger role in global stability efforts. This would demonstrate its willingness to share the burden of security and economic leadership, reinforcing the transatlantic alliance. More importantly, Europe needs to gain a voice in the decision-making process and not just acquiesce to incorrect policies. Today, as the Europeans are acting as spongers in terms of defense, this is impossible, but when Europe carries its weight, Washington will listen. I am optimistic that Europe can and will rise to this challenge, simply because we now know what needs to be done and new leaders are willing to act. This is why Vance's speech should not be met with the weakness of tears, but with the strength of action and change to propel the transatlantic alliance to new heights.

Briefs

Opp unites for alliance against govt

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, speaking to the media after the TTAP-GDA meeting, Pir Sadaruddin Shah Rashdi said that both sides held a detailed discussion on issues related to safeguarding Pakistan and its people. The politician confirmed that a meeting in Islamabad on February 26 and 27 would further discuss these issues. Meanwhile, GDA's Dr Fahimda Mirza remarked the huddle between the two political alliances discussed issues "compromising the national interest". She censured the passage of the 26th Constitutional Amendment and amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), terming them draconian laws. Dr Mirza further noted that both the TTAP and GDA would form committees as the next step to work together to achieve a common agenda.

Security forces kill...

FROM PAGE 01
Launched to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the "security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country". The security forces on Friday killed at least six terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in KP's Karak district, said the military's media wing. The country has been reeling under increased terrorist attacks targeting especially the law enforcers and security forces since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021, particularly in the bordering provinces of KP 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.

Pakistan closes key...

FROM PAGE 01
though no skirmishes have been reported. "I [Torkham crossing] is closed both for pedestrians and heavy vehicles since 12 at night on Feb. 21. No firing is reported from either side," said Naheed Khan, a senior police official in Pakistan's Khyber district. Residents of Bacha Mina, a village near the border on the Pakistani side, have begun leaving for safer locations as a precaution, while some loaded trucks have returned to Jamrud Bazaar, according to Khan. There has been no immediate response from Afghan authorities regarding the closure.

India dash Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01
bowled out in the final over despite an anchoring half-century by Saud Shakeel. Pakistan's new opening pair of Babar Azam and Imam-ul-Haq looked in fine touch as they added 41 runs before Hardik Pandya provided a much-needed breakthrough to India by getting the former caught behind. Babar scored 23 off 26 deliveries, smashing five boundaries in the process. Making his return to the national team, Imam could not convert a cautious start into a big knock as he was run out by Axar Patel in the next over, resulting in Pakistan slipping to 47/2 in 9.2 overs.

PM lands in Baku as...

FROM PAGE 01
expanding trade and investment, enhancing co-operation in the energy sector, synergize efforts to deal with climate change, deepening defense collaboration, and fostering cultural exchanges. Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements are expected to be signed, further solidifying the partnership between the two countries. As part of his engagements, the Prime Minister and the Azerbaijani leadership will also address the Pakistan-Azerbaijan Business Forum, scheduled for Monday.

Serena Hotels hosts invitational golf promote sports diplomacy

The tournament was graced by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf NI(M) T Bt as the Chief Guest, who highly praised Serena Hotels for its dedication and commitment to promote sports in Pakistan through their platform



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels Invitational Golf Tournament 2025 under its sports diplomacy initiative held at Margalla Green Golf Club. Scores of participants and spectators turned up to enjoy the great game of golf and admired Serena Hotel's efforts to promote healthy sports activities and the spirit of community engagement. The event brought together golf enthusiasts from various backgrounds,

showcasing Serena Hotels' dedication to using sports as a platform to connect people and celebrate athletic excellence. The tournament featured four categories: Diplomats, Government & Armed Forces, Corporate, and Women, with players demonstrating remarkable skill and technique throughout the competition. The tournament was graced by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf NI(M) T Bt as the Chief Guest, who highly praised Serena Hotels for its dedication and commitment to promote sports in Pa-



kistan through their platform. Following an exciting day of competition, the Chief Guest distributed prizes amongst the winners in all categories, recognizing their outstanding performances and encouraging continued participation in sports. Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, reaffirmed Serena Hotels' commitment to sports diplomacy, saying: "At Serena Hotels, we firmly believe in the power of sports to unite communities and inspire excellence. Through our Sports Diplomacy Initiative, we continue to support and pro-

vide various sporting events, promoting an environment of inclusion, engagement, opportunity and competitive spirit." Serena Hotels' Sports Diplomacy Initiative remains dedicated to encouraging young players to pursue their ambitions by providing them a platform regardless of their background and promoting active lifestyles through diverse sporting events. The Annual Invitational Golf Tournament continues to be a significant milestone in this journey, bringing together players from different sectors in the true spirit of sportsmanship.

Arsenal Premier League title hopes hit in shock defeat by West Ham



LONDON: Arsenal's Premier League title hopes suffered a hammer blow when Jarrod Bowen's goal just before half-time gave London rivals West Ham United a surprise 1-0 away victory on Saturday. Bowen headed in from close range in the 44th minute and Arsenal's feeble attack, missing a host of injured forwards, could not prevent a first home league defeat of the season. Arsenal barely troubled visiting keeper Alphonse Areola, managing two shots on target, and played the last 20 minutes with 10 men after substitute Myles Lewis-Skelly was red-carded for hauling down Mohammed Kudus. Mikel Arteta's second-placed side have 53 points from 26 games and could find themselves 11 points behind leaders Liverpool if they win at champions Manchester City on Sunday. Arsenal's last home league defeat came 10 months ago against Aston Villa and that ultimately proved decisive as

they failed to prevent Manchester City winning a fourth successive title. As their fans drifted out of the stadium on Saturday they surely felt as though another title bid will end in failure. With Kai Havertz, Gabriel Jesus, Gabriel Martinelli and Bukayo Saka all out injured, makeshift forward Mikel Merino proved the unlikely solution last week with both goals in a 2-0 victory at Leicester City. A week later Arsenal's attacking limitations were cruelly exposed as West Ham's defence enjoyed a stroll for most of the game on a balmy spring-like afternoon in north London. "It's a big blow. The performance today wasn't good enough. Really disappointed," Arsenal skipper Martin Odegaard said. "We lacked a bit in final third efficiency. We have to see the game back and analyse it but it wasn't good enough." Arsenal could have cut Liverpool's lead to five points and exerted some real pressure on Arne Slot's side if they had beaten a West Ham side they trounced 5-2 away this season. Instead, 16th-placed West Ham were full value for only their second win in six league games under new manager Graham Potter. Apart from a thunderous shot by Riccardo Calafiori that went straight at Areola, the hosts did nothing with their territorial superiority in a languid first half display. West Ham, on the other hand, looked dangerous on the counter-attack with Tomas Soucek twice heading off target and skipper Bowen dragging a good chance wide. With halftime approaching Arsenal's fans were already getting restless when West Ham took the lead. Bowen won the ball on the edge of his own area and fed it to Aaron Wan-Bissaka who cruised down the right side before crossing for Bowen to stoop and head past David Raya to claim his 50th Premier League goal. - Agencies

Watford ease to win over relegation-threatened Luton

Their squad was revamped in the winter transfer window, but with some players new to English football and others stepping up from League One like Bloomfield himself, he was banking on a fast gel, which has yet to happen

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Watford ended a dismal run of five successive home defeats with a comfortable win over relegation-haunted Luton Town in the M1 derby at Vicarage Road. Tom Dele-Bashiru put them ahead from the penalty spot after Mamadou Doumbia was brought down and Edo Kayembe doubled the advantage with a simple tap-in. Luton, who had won only one of their 26 previous away games across two seasons, failed to produce a meaningful effort on target in the opening half, with boss Matt Bloomfield still searching for his first success since taking charge in mid-January. Their squad was revamped in the winter transfer window, but with some players new to English football and others stepping up from League One like Bloomfield himself, he was banking on a fast gel, which has yet to happen. The victory lifts Watford to ninth in the Championship, three points outside the play-off places, while Luton remain bottom and five points from safety with just 12 games left to play. It took the Hatters 10 years and four promotions to make the journey from non-league to Premier League, but they are now in serious danger of falling back two levels in successive campaigns following last year's exit from the top flight.

Jack Draper withdraws from Dubai Tennis Championships

DUBAI: Jack Draper has announced his withdrawal from the Dubai Tennis Championships in order to "manage" his body and ensure his health for future events. The British No 1's announcement comes just a day after he fell to a three-set defeat in the Qatar Open final, losing 7-5 5-7 6-1 to Andrey Rublev. Draper, who has risen to a career-high ranking of 12th in the world following his run to the final in Doha, has spoken a number of times in the past about the importance of maintaining his body in peak condition to safeguard his fitness for the top matches. The 23-year-old endured hip problems earlier in the season - at the Australian Open notably, where he was forced to retire against Carlos Alcaraz - and he also missed playing in Rotterdam as a result. The Dubai Tennis Championships begin on Monday but, following a period of recovery, Draper is targeting a return at next month's Indian Wells tournament. In a post on X, Draper said: "Unfortunately, I have made the decision to withdraw from Dubai Duty Free. "After a great week at Qatar Open Tennis I'm taking onboard advice to prioritise my recovery and manage my body after a number of long matches, and give myself the best chance of competing consistently throughout the year. "I'm gutted not to compete at such an amazing event but will look forward to returning to competition at BNP Paribas Open and Miami Open." - Agencies



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, distributes prizes and medals among winners at the Faysal Bank SOP Unified Marathon 2025. The event celebrated inclusivity and sportsmanship, bringing together athletes from diverse backgrounds. - DNA

'England have found an edge to bounce back'

If you went outside the bars and pubs around the ground after the victory over Scotland, they were absolutely rammed two hours after the game

WEB DESK

LONDON: World Cup winner Matt Dawson reflects on England's narrow Six Nations victory over Scotland, and assesses how the battle for British and Irish Lions selection at fly-half is shaping up. I'm always in the camp of winning over entertainment. Of course England want to entertain the fans, but when you're in that white shirt, you just want to win the game. As a player, I never thought 'how can I do this to entertain the fans?' If these two wins over France and Scotland are the start of a 10-game unbeaten run, England can be the ugliest team in the world and the roof will still come off Allianz Stadium. The fans love coming to Twickenham, knowing no-one beats you or messes you around. If you went outside the bars and pubs around the ground after the victory over Scotland, they were absolutely rammed two hours after the game. England have found a little edge over the past couple of games where they have gone behind and it is invaluable experience for these players to bounce back and grind out the

win. It will stand them in good stead. They have a solid set-piece, which is going to handle most teams. The line-out looks solid with Ollie Chessum coming in, and at the breakdown they are getting the balance of the back row. For me, the glaring omission is kicking the ball when it was the wrong option. When there is a five-on-three in attack, let's isolate that final defender and walk in for the try. I don't mind kicking when it's really static. It's difficult to break down Test defences when you don't have momentum in the game. But it seems like England are recognising scenarios from training where 'this is what we are going to do', regardless of the opposition. I started to feel England were getting away from that in the autumn and previously in last year's Six Nations where they have been 'full metal jacket' ready to attack. The first line break came towards the end of the first half when they had a bit of territory and possession. Marcus Smith went through the middle, but the top teams finish those opportunities off and they are the bits that will frustrate them. England have really talented, skilful individuals and I would like to see them take a bit more calculated risk. I love their openness and hon-

esty after the game. They knew they hadn't played at their capabilities but they really did dig in, particularly around defence. It was incredibly sound and dominant and it gave them a chance. They have needed a bounce of the ball in the past couple of games, which didn't go their way in the autumn, but they are showing the same fight and commitment and getting their reward. England are flying in and competing for the ball at the breakdown but there was a pattern to their weakness on the right flank. Defensively, England are going nowhere. If you take them on around the fringes they look solid and Fin Smith makes some big hits at fly-half, but they desperately need to improve outside that number 13 channel. Against France they got undone a bit by the way they were drifting in defence - and Scotland had done their homework. If England kicked long, Blair Kinghorn and Duhan van der Merwe were going to attack them. They were brilliant and England had no answer until they got into the dressing room. They then shifted how they were going to defend by not competing as much and spreading wider. They were able to absorb it better and took control of the game. Eng-

land then go six points up after Fin Smith's penalty, but the one thing they should have been screaming at each other from the restart was to exit properly and score the next points. Scotland were going to throw the kitchen sink at them and the next three points would have killed the game. That mentality for me is still a little bit lacking. It will come, and ultimately they won, but if that is a game to decide the Six Nations and you are playing against France or Ireland, you have to assume they make the conversion at the end and win by a point. It's Italy next back at home and it's a great opportunity to up the risk profile of their attack. I'm not asking for any change in personnel - it's about making different decisions in those Test-match scenarios. Grind Italy down, kick our goals and score tries. With the chest pumped out after two wins at home and skipper Maro Ito leading the charge, England should be 20-point winners of that game. They can't influence France and Ireland, but this Six Nations is a million miles from being over and Grand Slams are hard to come by. Ireland are still favourites but I have a sneaking suspicion France can cause an upset in Dublin.

Inauguration of the Country-wide Training of English Works

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) inaugurated the Country-wide Training of English Works : Administrators and Teachers at local hotel. The event marks a significant step in enhancing employability skills and English proficiency among Pakistani youth. "English Works" is a U.S.-funded initiative under the Regional English Language Office (RELO) that equips young Pakistanis with essential skills for professional success. The program focuses on English communication for business and various professions, critical thinking, problem-solving, personality development, and 21st-century digital and soft skills. To date, 6,000 youth have benefited from the program. From 2023 to 2025, NUML is training an additional 2,655 students, preparing them for their future careers. The inauguration ceremony was led by Rector NUML, Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI (M) (Retd), with Mr Jerrold Frank, Head of RELO at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, the Rector NUML underscored the importance of employability skills for Pakistani youth and the need to train educators who can guide them toward successful careers. He highlighted the role of such initiatives in strengthening Pakistan's socio-economic growth and global image as a progressive nation. Expressing gratitude to the U.S. Embassy, he emphasized how these programs empower young Pakistanis to excel in freelancing, e-commerce, and digital marketing, leveraging opportunities in the expanding e-economy.

Pakistan foreign ties..

FROM PAGE 01
We are ready to sacrifice our blood for the country's security," he remarked. The PML-N leader further stressed that national security is a red line and called for an end to the culture of abusive rhetoric. Criticizing the previous PTI government, he stated that Pakistan's relations with friendly nations suffered under its tenure and that not a single development project was initiated during its rule.

Govt hopes to reduce..

FROM PAGE 01
During his interaction with journalists in Lahore, the finance minister highlighted positive economic indicators, including a rise in remittance senders to 35 million and an increase in Roshan Digital Account inflows. Aurangzeb emphasized the private sector's vital role in driving the country's economic progress, stating that foreign exchange reserves were steadily growing.

Youth can shape...

FROM PAGE 01
that just look across the border and see what is happening in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He said he had attended few conferences in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other places and what was the reason that when we talk about Gaza, atrocities on Palestinians and brave Burhan Wani, then silence was seen on social media. He said what was the reason that artificial intelligence-based algorithms or under new technology, likes decrease, visibility goes down and outreach reduces.

US unfreezes \$ 397 mln...

FROM PAGE 01
that a congressional aide said monitored Islamabad's use of US-made F-16 fighter jets to ensure they are employed for counterterrorism operations and not against rival India. Donald Trump ordered a 90-day pause on foreign aid shortly after taking office on Jan 20, halting funding for everything from programs that fight starvation and deadly diseases to providing shelters for millions of displaced people across the globe.

Briefs

KIU, CPJRC
sign DoU
to setup
Karakoram
Research
Station

BEIJING: Karakoram International University (KIU) and China-Pakistan Joint Research Centre (CPJRC) signed a Document of Understanding (DoU) to establish Karakoram Observation and Research Station on Natural Hazards and Environment (KORS) under the Government of Pakistan approved project. The DoU Signing Ceremony and Panel Discussion were held at Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Chengdu, Gwadar Pro reported on Saturday, quoting an official statement released by KIU. The cooperation agreement was signed by Engr. Professor Dr. Attaullah Shah, Vice-Chancellor KIU, and Prof. Su Lijun, Director-General of CPJRC. As per details, the state-of-the-art research Centre will be built at KIU under the collaboration framework between KIU and CPJRC, a joint project of China and Pakistan approved under Public Sector Development Program (PSPD) of Pakistan. —APP

Pak
delegation off
to China to
explore food
sector

LAHORE: A high-level delegation from South Punjab, led by Shahid Imran, Convener of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Regional Committee on Food, left for China on Sunday to explore collaborative avenues in the food sector. Prior to departure, he told reporters that China, being a global leader in food technology and a major importer of agricultural goods, offers significant potential for Pakistani exporters. The delegation would engage in meetings and site visits to understand China's advanced practices and identify areas for mutual growth. This initiative, he said, aligns with Pakistan's broader strategy to boost its food exports and tap into international markets. The trip is expected to pave the way for long-term collaborations, benefiting both the countries and strengthening their strategic partnership in the food industry. Shahid Imran said that the delegation comprising industry leaders and agricultural experts, aims to strengthen bilateral ties and foster partnerships with Chinese counterparts. The visit will focus on enhancing trade, technology transfer, and knowledge sharing in areas such as food processing, agricultural innovation, and value-added products, especially snacks. —APP

Furniture
industry
stakeholders to
review budget
proposals

LAHORE: The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) is going to convene a special meeting of all stakeholders to review and consolidate their budget proposals for submission to the federal government. Talking to media here Sunday, the PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq added that the meeting aims to address key challenges and opportunities within the furniture industry, ensuring that the sector's needs are adequately represented in the upcoming national budget. Stakeholders including manufacturers, exporters, designers, and industry experts, would assemble to discuss strategies for growth, innovation, and sustainability. He emphasized the importance of aligning the budget proposals with the government's economic policies to foster a conducive environment for the furniture industry. Key agenda items would be tax reforms, incentives for local manufacturing, export promotion, and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The council also plans to highlight the need for infrastructure development, skill enhancement programmes, and access to affordable raw materials. —APP

Sea of people bid farewell to Nasrallah

Resistance will endure in
new phase, Qassem promises

"He was a man who led the resistance to the nation and the nation to the resistance, with his unwavering focus always on Palestine and Al-Quds," his eminence added

FOREIGN DESK

BEIRUT: Lovers of Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah have filled the streets of Beirut and Dahiyeh on Sunday to take part in the funeral of the late Hezbollah leader and Sayyed Hashem Safieddine. Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium and the surrounding area were crowded with mourners in a scene described as a sea of people who flocked to the Lebanese capital and its southern suburb, Dahiyeh. Dressed in Black, mourners raised Lebanese, Palestinian, Hezbollah and Amal flags, as well as photos of the martyred leaders and the fighters who fell during the latest Israeli aggression on Lebanon. The funeral officially started at 13:00 (Beirut time) with masses at the stadium chanting in tribute to Hezbollah Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem, renewing allegiance to the path of resistance. Holy Quran was recited at the beginning of the official funeral which was personally attended by Speak-



er Nabih Berri. The Lebanese parliament speaker was also representing President Joseph Aoun. Lebanese, regional officials and activists as well as popular crowds attended the mass funeral. Ayatollah Sayyed Mojtaba Al-Hosseini then read Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Imam Sayyed Ali Khamenei's letter to the funeral. Mourners at the sports city then broke in tears as the coffins

entered the stadium. Chants of "At your service O' Nasrallah," and "We Shall Keep the covenant" were clearly heard by the crowds. In a moment of historic significance, Hezbollah Secretary

General Sheikh Naim Qassem addressed the massive crowds mourning the martyrdom of Sacred Martyr Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah and his companion, Sayyed Hashem Safieddine. Speaking via video screens at Beirut's Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium, Sheikh Qassem delivered a powerful speech, pledging that the resistance would endure despite all sacrifices. Saluting the throngs of mourners, he declared, "O' most honorable people, you have upheld the covenant!" His eminence emphasized Sayyed Nasrallah's pivotal role in leading the resistance to the nation and uniting the nation with the resistance. Sheikh Qassem honored Hezbollah martyred secretary general Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah as "a historic and unparalleled leader—a beacon for the free people of the world, a beloved figure among the resistance fighters, the oppressed, and the downtrodden." "He was a man who led the resistance to the nation and the nation to the resistance, with his unwavering focus always on Palestine and Al-Quds," his eminence added.

Dubai hosts grand global
launch of Burj Azizi

DUBAI: Dubai has witnessed a spectacular global launch event for Burj Azizi, poised to be the world's second tallest tower, at the Coca-Cola Arena. The grand ceremony was attended by over 15,000 distinguished guests, including government officials, investors, business leaders, diplomats, media personnel, and influencers. The event was further elevated by a stunning performance from American singer Jennifer Lopez. According to the UAE media reports, Burj Azizi will stand at an impressive height of 725 meters upon completion in 2028, making it the second tallest tower in the world. The 131-story skyscraper will offer a unique blend of residential, hospitality, retail, and entertainment spaces. The luxury shopping mall inside the tower will house outlets of globally renowned brands. Spacious one, two, and three-bedroom apartments, along with a business center, cinema, restaurants, cafes, and a supermarket, will be part of the project, ensuring world-class facilities for residents and visitors alike. The tower will also feature a prestigious seven-star hotel, offering an unparalleled experience in luxury hospitality. The hotel will boast specialty restaurants representing various international cuisines, including Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Indian, Turkish, French, and Russian, providing guests with an exquisite gastronomic journey. Upon completion, Burj Azizi is set to break multiple records, including the highest observation deck on the 130th floor, the tallest hotel lobby on the 111th floor, the highest nightclub on the 126th floor, the tallest restaurant on the 122nd floor, and the highest hotel room on the 118th floor. Additionally, the tower will house a dedicated museum that will showcase the history and construction journey of this architectural marvel. Expressing his delight at the launch, Mirwais Azizi, Founder and Chairman of Azizi Developments, stated, "It is truly a moment of pride to see a vision come to life after years of dedication and relentless efforts from experts worldwide. Burj Azizi stands as a testament to Dubai's engineering excellence and architectural innovation, marking a significant milestone in the city's skyline." He extended his gratitude to the leadership of Dubai for their unwavering support and encouragement, specifically thanking His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, for his visionary leadership. "I am also deeply grateful to Dubai's authorities for their steadfast cooperation in bringing this ambitious project to reality," he added. With its groundbreaking design and record-breaking features, Burj Azizi is set to redefine luxury and elegance, further cementing Dubai's reputation as a global hub for architectural brilliance. —

Syrian national
dialogue to begin
on Feb 25

DAMASCUS: Syria's new authorities will hold a national dialogue conference starting on February 25 to discuss a new path for the nation after the overthrow of Bashar Assad in December, two members of its preparatory committee said on Sunday. Foreign capitals will be closely watching the conference as part of a political process in Syria that they say needs to be inclusive of its ethnically diverse and multi-religious population as they consider suspending sanctions on the country. Holding the conference has been a key pledge of former Al Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) which took control of Damascus on December 8 in a stunning offensive that prompted then-president Assad to flee to Russia, ending more than 50 years of his family's autocratic rule. The preparatory committee's seven members consulted with some 4,000 people across Syria over the last week to gather views that would help shape a constitutional declaration, a new economic framework and a plan for institutional reform, the committee told reporters on Sunday. HTS-appointed President Ahmed Sharaa has said the conference was part of an inclusive political process to draft a constitution, which he said could take up to three years, and then hold elections, which he said could take four years. The conference is scheduled for two days but could be extended if necessary, committee member Hassan Dugheim said, and a new government expected to be formed next month would also benefit from the conference's recommendations. APP

EIPA Awards to promote Pakistan's
positive image, economic growth

Islamabad: The third annual EIPA Awards 2025, organized by Brain Designer, took place in Islamabad with the aim of promoting Pakistan's positive image and encouraging foreign investment while fostering tourism in the country. The event brought together key stakeholders from the tourism, investment, and business sectors, including foreign diplomats, overseas Pakistanis' organizations, and officials from Chambers of Commerce and Industries, as well as prominent real estate figures. The awards recognized individuals and organizations for their significant contributions in 2024 to attracting foreign investment, supporting economic growth, promoting tourism, and restoring Pakistan's soft image abroad. The ceremony honored those who played a pivotal role in enhancing Pakistan's international stature. The event's Chief Guest was His Excellency Mr. Yusuf Sharifzoda Toirali, Ambassador of Tajikistan. The Guest of Honor was Mr. Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of Indonesia, along with other distinguished diplomats including Mr. Yushau Mohammed (Charge d'Affaires, Nigerian High Commission), Mr. Behbud Gadali (First Secretary, Azerbaijan Embassy), Mr. Syafik Firdous bin Hasbullah (Deputy Head of Mission, High Commission of Malaysia), and Mr. Saidjon (Deputy Head of Mission, Tajikistan Embassy). Also attending were Mr. Muhammad Rauf Raja, CEO of Brain Designers (Explore and Invest Pakistan), Mr. Tariq Jadoon, Vice President of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Mr. Malik Sohail, Chairman Coordination of FPCCI, Mr. Timur Aziz, Executive Vice President of NayaTel, Kiran Afzal senior officials from the World Bank group, Ch. Riaz Basra Chariman ICCR and Mr. Dosil Ali Jan - Senior Vice President - Rawalpindi Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industries, along with key figures from the hospitality, tourism, and real estate sectors. In his welcoming speech, Mr. Muhammad Rauf Raja, CEO of Brain Designers, emphasized the importance of showcasing Pakistan's soft image globally. He highlighted that Pakistan is a peaceful country, with a population where 65% are youth, offering vast investment opportunities. He also mentioned that the hospitality sector in Pakistan is currently witnessing an investment of \$7 billion. Mr. Tariq Jadoon, Vice President of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, stressed the need for empowering youth to shape the nation's future and enhance Pakistan's position internationally. He noted that the country's economy is on the path to recovery, citing a decline in interest rates, control over the dollar exchange rate, and a reduction in inflation as key factors contributing to economic stability. In his speech, Tajikistan's Ambassador Mr. Yusuf Sharifzoda congratulated the organizers for the successful awards ceremony and affirmed his country's support for Pakistan's development and economic revival. He praised Pakistan's entrepreneurial spirit, which, he said, is crucial for the nation's progress, and advocated for Mr. Muhammad Rauf Raja to receive recognition from Pakistan for his efforts in promoting the country's positive image and bringing foreign investment. The awards ceremony was followed by a panel discussion on promoting tourism in Pakistan. The panelists discussed the challenges facing Pakistan's tourism sector and explored potential solutions for its development. —DNA

Turkiye keen to boost bilateral trade with Pakistan

DNA

SIALKOT :Ambassador of Republic of Turkiye in Pakistan Irfan Neziroglu has said that his country is keen to boost mutual trade with Pakistan, and pledged to help remove all hurdles to it. He stated this during an important meeting with Sialkot exporters at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). SCCI President Ikram-ul-Haq, Vice President (VP) Omer Khalid and Sialkot business community representatives were also present. The ambassador expressed hope that the trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye would grow significantly in the near future. He assured his full commitment and support for further strengthening ties between the two countries and stressed that Turkiye was making efforts for enhancing and strengthening its economic ties with Pakistan. "Sialkot is the hometown of Allama Iqbal and Iqbal is our common hero," he added. The ambassador highlighted key potential sectors for collaboration, including education, textiles, leather and pharmaceuticals. "Entrepreneurs of both countries

should know each other more and work hard to expand trade and economic relations while the embassy will fully cooperate in the efforts," he said and stressed the importance of joint ventures, business-to-business (B2B) interactions and sectors-specific meetings between both countries. He added that regular exchange of trade delegations would be crucial in ex-

ploring untapped potential. "I believe that commercial relations will make it easy for political, cultural and other relations. I will motivate the Turkiye business community to buy Sialkot-made products directly from Sialkot instead of purchasing them indirectly from other countries at high prices. The bonds between the people of Pakistan and Turkey are strong and

enduring, with both nations standing by each other through thick and thin," he maintained. He said that Pakistan and Turkiye are two brotherly countries having centuries-old relationship. "The Turkish people have great love for Pakistani brethren." The ambassador showed keen interest in SCCI's documentary "Sialkot, the City of Progressive

People", which was screened during the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Ikram-ul-Haq said that there was a huge potential to increase the volume of bilateral trade. "Sialkot is an important economic hub and totally export-oriented city of the country. Sialkot represents an industrial setup producing specialized products that are supplied to top brands and buyers all over the world. We produce sports goods, surgical instruments, leather products, gloves of all sorts, textiles items, sports wear, martial arts uniform and accessories, musical instruments, kitchen ware & table ware, hollow ware, hunting knives, table cutlery/flatware, and military uniform badges," he added. He said that Sialkot-made footballs, field hockey sticks, cricket gear and boxing gloves were used in international games including the Olympics and World Cups. Earlier, the ambassador visited several leading industrial units in Sialkot. He witnessed the craftsmanship of artisans and took keen interest in the production process of sports goods and surgical instruments.

President RCCI,
champions
industrialization,
tax reform

ISLAMABAD: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Usman Shaukat, addressing the 3rd All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference (AP-CPC) at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI), emphasized industrialization as the cornerstone for Pakistan's economic uplift. He highlighted the need for a robust industrial policy to drive growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance exports, said a press release issued here. In his address during the conference's first session, Usman Shaukat urged the government to adopt a collaborative approach in policy-making. He stressed that taxation policies should be rationalized and developed through meaningful consultations with key stakeholders, including chambers of commerce and industry leaders across the country. —APP

Russia's top
diplomat to
visit Turkiye
Monday

ISTANBUL: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit Turkiye on Monday, which marks the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Turkish diplomatic sources said Sunday. Lavrov will hold talks in Ankara with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan, the source said, adding that the men will discuss the war in Ukraine, among other things. Turkiye, a member of NATO, wants to play a leading role in bringing an end to hostilities, as it tried to do in March 2022 by twice hosting direct negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv. Receiving his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan asserted that his country would be an "ideal host" for talks on Ukraine involving Moscow, Kyiv and Washington. Moscow and Washington have already begun a direct dialogue in recent weeks, against a backdrop of rapprochement between US President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin. Russian and American officials met in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to begin rebuilding their relations, a meeting denounced by Zelensky, who fears an agreement on Ukraine reached without him at the table. Lavrov, who last visited Turkiye in October, is also expected to visit Russian ally Iran. —APP

France makes
arrests
after deadly
'Islamist'
knife attack

MULHOUSE, France: French police have made several arrests since a man went on a stabbing rampage, killing one and wounding several others in what President Emmanuel Macron called an "Islamist terrorist act," anti-terror prosecutors told AFP Sunday. The knife-wielding suspect, identified by prosecutors as a 37-year-old Algerian-born man, was arrested at the site of Saturday's attack in the eastern city of Mulhouse. He was on a terrorism watchlist and subject to deportation orders. A further three people were in custody in connection with the case Sunday, the PNAT prosecutors unit said, without giving details. Local prosecutor Nicolas Heitz said the suspect, who he did not name, was registered on France's terrorist watchlist. Speaking at the police station late Saturday, Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau said the man had "a schizophrenic profile" and his act had "a psychiatric dimension." Retailleau said France had repeatedly attempted to expel him from the country, but Algeria refused to cooperate. The rampage occurred around 4 p.m. (1500 GMT) near a busy market in Mulhouse, a city of around 110,000 people near the German border. At the time, demonstrators were rallying in support of the Democratic Republic of Congo. A 69-year-old Portuguese man was fatally wounded while parking attendants and police were also hurt. —APP

Briefs

Latif Khosa calls for adherence to constitution

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Latif Khosa has emphasised that the country's progress is directly linked to the implementation of the constitution. Speaking to the media after visiting Mazare-Quaid alongside party leaders, Khosa stated that the constitution is being treated as a mere piece of paper. He stressed that if Pakistan is to advance, strict adherence to constitutional principles is essential. Quoting Quaid-e-Azam, he said, "The people are the real rulers," but lamented that lawlessness has taken over the country. He accused both corrupt elites and criminals of destroying the nation's foundation. Khosa further criticised the current political scenario, pointing out that a leader who won 180 seats is incarcerated in Adiala Jail, while someone with just 17 seats has become the prime minister. He termed this an unprecedented injustice in the country's history.

Syrian national dialogue to begin on 25

DAMASCUS: Syria's new authorities will hold a national dialogue conference starting on February 25 to discuss a new path for the nation after the overthrow of Bashar Assad in December, two members of its preparatory committee said on Sunday. Foreign capitals will be closely watching the conference as part of a political process in Syria that they say needs to be inclusive of its ethnically diverse and multi-religious population as they consider suspending sanctions on the country. Holding the conference has been a key pledge of former Al Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) which took control of Damascus on December 8 in a stunning offensive that prompted then-president Assad to flee to Russia, ending more than 50 years of his family's autocratic rule. The preparatory committee's seven members consulted with some 4,000 people across Syria over the last week to gather views that would help shape a constitutional declaration, a new economic framework and a plan for institutional reform, the committee told reporters on Sunday. HTS-appointed President Ahmed Sharaa has said the conference was part of an inclusive political process to draft a constitution, which he said could take up to three years, and then hold elections, which he said could take four years. The conference is scheduled for two days but could be extended if necessary, committee member Hassan Dugheim said, and a new government expected to be formed next month would also benefit from the conference's recommendations. - Agencies

Celebrating ancient civilizations

Sogetsu Ikebana spring exhibition opens in Lahore

H.E. Ambassador AKAMATSU Shuichi, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, expressed his delight to see the exhibition with such an evocative theme "Gandhara, Taxila, and Mehrgarh Civilizations" as these names, said the Ambassador, are important in Pakistan, Japan, and worldwide



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Sogetsu Ikebana Spring Exhibition, themed "Gandhara, Taxila, and Mehrgarh Civilizations,"

opened in Lahore on Sunday. The exhibition, organized by the Sogetsu Lahore Study Group, showcases the work of Sogetsu Ikebana artists who have drawn inspiration from these ancient civilizations, capturing their essence in unique and evocative floral arrangements.

Israel using 'flimsy' excuses to delay release of abductees

Meanwhile, another senior member of the Hamas political bureau warned earlier that Netanyahu and his cabinet are sabotaging the second phase of the ceasefire agreement by not engaging in negotiations

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Hamas has condemned the Israeli regime's "flimsy" excuses to delay the release of Palestinian abductees under a swap deal honored by the Palestinian resistance movement. In a statement on Sunday, Hamas political bureau member Izzat Al-Rishq said Hamas strongly condemns the occupying regime's decision to delay the release of the abductees. "This decision once again exposes the occupation's evasions and its renunciation of its commitments," he said. He noted that Israel's claim that the "handover ceremonies are humiliating" is a "false pretext" and a "flimsy excuse" aimed at evading its obligations under the exchange agreement. "These ceremonies do not involve any humiliation of the prisoners; rather, they reflect a dignified and humane treatment towards them," the Hamas official added. "The real humiliation is what our prisoners endure during the release process,

including torture, beatings, and deliberate humiliation up until the last moments." Al-Rishq argued that Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision reflects a deliberate attempt to obstruct the agreement, constitutes a clear violation of its terms, and demonstrates the regime's unreliability in fulfilling its commitments. Meanwhile, another senior member of the Hamas political bureau warned earlier that Netanyahu and his cabinet are sabotaging the second phase of the ceasefire agreement by not engaging in negotiations. The negotiations for the second phase of the ceasefire agreement between Hamas and the Israeli regime are due to end on March 1. After failing to achieve any of its war objectives in Gaza, Israel was forced to agree to a ceasefire deal with Hamas which went into effect on January 19. The six-week first phase saw the release of Israeli captives in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian abductees, the partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, and delivery of aid into the territory devastated by the 15 months of relentless Israeli bombardment.

Zelensky willing to give up presidency for Nato bid

With Trump amping up peace negotiations with Russia this month, many expect an election to follow shortly after a ceasefire is agreed

FOREIGN DESK

KIEV: President Volodymyr Zelensky is ready to step down as president if it means "peace for Ukraine," he said during the Ukraine: Year 2025 forum in Kyiv on Feb. 23. Talks about elections in Ukraine have amplified in recent months despite martial law prohibiting them. Zelensky, who was elected in 2019 for five years, came under fire from U.S. President Donald Trump who recently accused the Ukrainian leader of not wanting to hold elections.

"I am focusing on security today and not in 20 years time. I don't plan to be in power for 10 years," Zelensky told the forum. Ukraine has repeatedly said that it won't hold elections until the war is over, in line with martial law as Russia constantly bombards the country and occupies one-fifth of its territory. With Trump amping up peace negotiations with Russia this month, many expect an election to follow shortly after a ceasefire is agreed. These constraints have not stopped Trump from repeating Russian propaganda points and accusing Zelensky of being "a dictator." Ukrainian NGOs have said organizing an election during the war is "impossible," as elections must be preceded by a stable ceasefire backed by security guarantees and proper preparations for the election process, including restoring relevant infrastructure. Zelensky's administration pledged to hold elections "immediately" after the end of the war, thus allowing soldiers and refugees to safely take part in the vote as well. "The Ukrainian consensus on elections no earlier than six months after the end of martial law is supported by the authorities, the opposition, and the society," the statement by the Ukrainian NGOs read. According to a February survey, 69% of Ukrainians believe that Zelensky should remain in office until the next elections can be held after the end of martial law. Several opposition politicians also supported this position, warning against Russian attempts to use the elections to divide society.

NDMA, AKF sends 14th aid shipment of relief to Gaza

The consignment includes around 100 tons of critical relief supplies



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has sent a 14th humanitarian relief consignment, consisting of 100 tons of essential relief items, to Palestine, reaffirming the nation's steadfast support for the people of Gaza. The consignment, coordinated in partnership with the Al-Khidmat Foundation, includes around 100 tons of critical relief supplies such as bell tents, winterized tents, tarpaulin sheets, and medical equipment. A send-off ceremony was held at Jin-

nah International Airport, Karachi, attended by senior officials from NDMA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Al-Khidmat Foundation. The aid was shipped via a chartered flight departing from Jinnah International Airport in Karachi to El Arish International Airport in Egypt, from where it will be transported to Gaza. This initiative was carried out under the directives of the prime minister, reflecting the government's commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza during their time of need. This shipment is part of Pakistan's ongoing humanitarian efforts and marks the 25th overall

relief consignment sent to war-affected people of Middle East. With this shipment, Pakistan has dispatched a total of 1,478 tons of relief aid exclusively for Palestine, demonstrating the country's continued commitment to supporting the people of Gaza in these difficult times. Overall, Pakistan has dispatched 1,961 tons of humanitarian aid, including 372 tons for Lebanon and 111 tons for Syria. The Government of Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to standing with the people of Palestine and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance based on the evolving needs of those affected by the ongoing crisis.

Trump right to engage Putin on talks

LONDON: US President Donald Trump was right to re-establish links with Russian leader Vladimir Putin to set up peace talks to end the war in Ukraine, a senior Labour minister has said. Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said there could be "no negotiated peace without Russia" and that Trump's approach had brought "Russians to the table". The US president has faced a backlash for excluding Ukraine from talks after his aides met Russian officials in Saudi Arabia. Trump has also suggested Ukraine may be a bystander, saying it has "no cards" in the deal. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer will meet Trump in Washington this week and press for Ukraine to be "at the heart" of any peace talks. Speaking on Sunday with Laura Kuensberg, Phillipson said that Trump thawing diplomatic ties with Russia and Putin was "the right approach". "President Trump has brought the Russians to the table," she added. When asked by Kuensberg if welcoming Putin back was the right move, Phillipson said, "absolutely". "There can be no settlement, no negotiated peace, without Russia," she said. - Agencies

Punjab launches free transplant program

LAHORE: Punjab has launched the most comprehensive transplant programme in the country's history, offering five free transplant operations to eligible citizens. Under the new CM Transplant Programme, the state will provide free liver, kidney, bone marrow, and cornea transplants, as well as cochlear implants for children born with congenital hearing loss, Express News reported. Beneficiaries must register with the Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority in order to access these services. The scheme is designed to cover transplant procedures carried out in both public and private hospitals. In addition, a toll-free number (09009 0800) has been activated at the directive of the Chief Minister to facilitate registrations and provide further information. Punjab CM Nawaz said, The state is fully aware of every citizen's needs, and we will fulfil our duty.

Pakistan, Russia explore coop in education

The delegation also explored avenues for boosting tourism, recognizing its potential to strengthen people-to-people connections and cultural understanding

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan Albert Khorev met with a delegation led by Habib Ahmed, honorary consul of the Russian Federation in Lahore to discuss strengthening bilateral ties across multiple sectors. The meeting, attended by prominent figures including Prof Dr Muhammad Ashraf Nizami and senior former bureaucrat Dr Allah Bakhsh Malik, focused on fostering collaboration in science, culture, education, business, and technology. A key highlight of the discussions was the emphasis on student exchange programs, aimed at enhancing educational cooperation and mutual learning experiences between Pakistan and Russia. The delegation also explored avenues for boosting tourism, recognizing its potential to strengthen people-to-people connections and cultural understanding.

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